

RJ resumes Muscat flights

AMMAN (Petra) — The Royal Jordanian (RJ) said Friday it would resume its flights to Oman as of Sunday, Feb. 3. An RJ spokesman said the national carrier will operate flights to the Omani capital Muscat and that passengers coming from or leaving the Gulf can use the RJ flights which will operate on Amman-Muscat route. The RJ decision, the spokesman said, arises from RJ's interest in serving Arab and Jordanian nationals. He described it as a practical translation of the RJ's role in maintaining "the bridges of communication and rapprochement between Jordan and the Gulf countries." The airline suspended its flights to Gulf destinations and beyond around the time the Gulf war broke out on Jan. 17. It has been flying to several European destinations as well as Cairo and Nicosia since then. The resumption of Muscat flights will help passengers flying onto India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and beyond.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية

Jordan denounces Israeli practices

GENEVA (Petra) — Jordan's permanent representative to the European headquarters of the United Nations, Sherif Fawaz Sharaf, has condemned the oppressive Israeli practices in the occupied Arab territories and respect of the human rights of the Palestinians under the Israeli occupation and ensuring the necessary protection for them. Addressing a meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Committee held here, Mr. Sharaf said Israel was violating human rights in the occupied territories and disregarding international law, by rejecting all peace initiatives and turning a deaf ear to all United Nations resolutions. Mr. Sharaf stressed the need for holding an international peace conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations attended by all parties involved to reach a just and peaceful settlement to the Palestine question. The Israeli settlement policy in the occupied territories, Mr. Sharaf said, is illegal and contravenes the Fourth Geneva Convention, which calls for the protection of civilians in time of war. These settlements have been the subject of a resolution adopted by the U.N. Human Rights Committee, Mr. Sharaf noted.

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Iraq says it withdrew from Khafji

Iraq reports 'large number' of deaths in 'deliberate attacks'

Combined agency dispatches

IRAQ SAID Friday that allied warplanes had machine-gunned "a very large number" of civilians and said captured pilots should be treated as war criminals. Baghdad Radio threatened U.S. President George Bush, British Prime Minister John Major, French President Francois Mitterrand and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. It called them criminals directly responsible for the actions of the pilots. "They should know that they will not be pardoned but that they will be chased personally and that every one of them will receive the punishment he deserves," the radio said. "Traitor Fahd, in particular, should know that the Iraqis will not be only after him but will chase every member of his family until the last root of this evil Jewish family plaguing the Arab land and holy places is uprooted," the radio said. The radio said in a commentary that allied warplanes had strafed and machine-gunned pedestrians on the streets. It did not give a specific casualty figure, but said "a very large number" of civilians had been killed. "The crimes of the U.S., British, French and Italian pilots should be viewed as war crimes that violate the laws and foundations of war, particularly the laws and conventions which call for

safeguarding civilians in times of war," the radio said.

Those pilots have deliberately bombed purely residential districts and civilian installations which have nothing to do with the war effort. They have killed very large numbers of women, children and old people in extreme cold blood," it added.

Six American cruise missiles roared across Baghdad Friday and a western correspondent there said two apparently struck residential areas of the city.

Television film showed two of the missiles speeding at low-level across the city.

Peter Arnett, correspondent for the U.S. Cable News Network, said in a report from Baghdad six cruise missiles in all were seen. He said two apparently struck residential areas.

Correspondents were taken to one site about 45 minutes later in an up-market area of Baghdad where dust still hung in the air from demolished buildings.

"It was clear to us that these were freshly cratered, freshly damaged," Arnett said.

Government officials said there were several killed or wounded in the hour-long barrage. But the officials would not disclose exact figures.

The first missile hit the Karada Sharqiya district of Baghdad at 11 a.m. (0800 GMT). It levelled the home of an Iraqi merchant, Razak Sahman, and started a fire.

By the time reporters arrived at the scene, civil defence teams had taken away most of the casualties.

The last four victims were being put into ambulances that sped away towards Baghdad hospital. One of them clearly was a child, six to eight years old, and it was not immediately clear if he was alive.

The condition of the other three also could not be determined.

Mr. Razzak, in his early 50s, was screaming hysterically. Carrying an apparently unharmed infant, he said: "It was so powerful, that my entire house is gone, collapsed." He then waved reporters away.

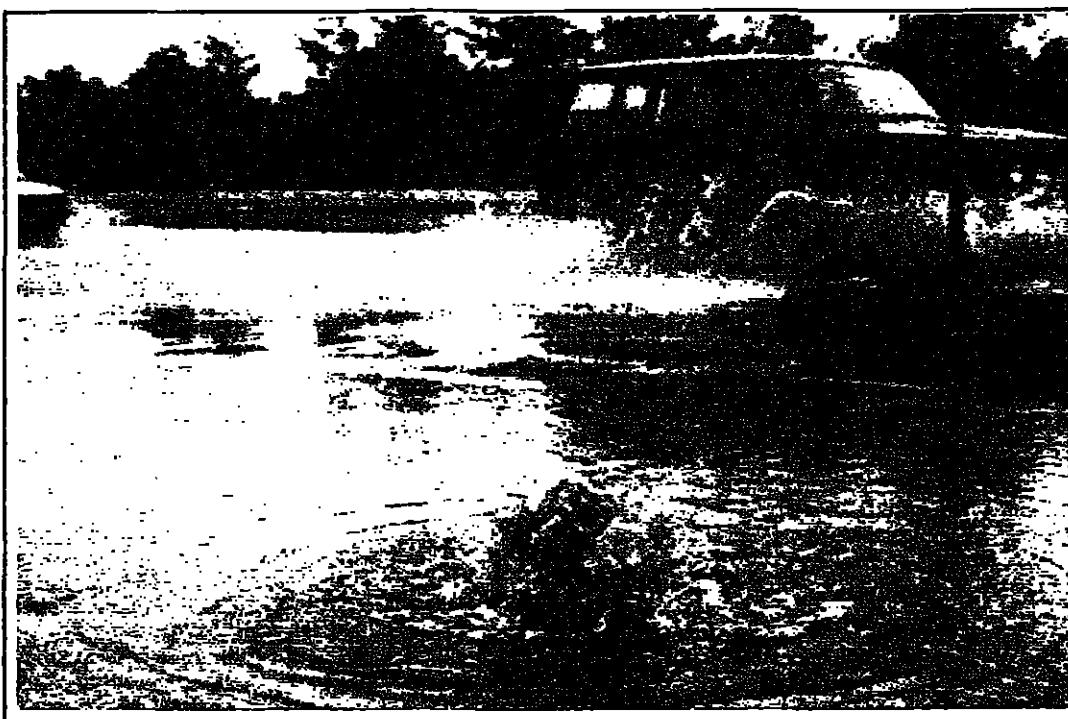
In the nearby Masbah district several houses were destroyed by the second Tomahawk attack of the day. It crashed less than 500 metres from the U.S. embassy compound.

A woman who said her two brothers were injured in the explosion, shouted at American reporters who tried to interview her. "Is this Western justice?"

Suba Al Turehi said pointing to the debris of her single-storey house. "You are treating us like Red Indians. Go away, go away."

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said Friday it was doing its best to

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HEAVY SHOWERS: Rains lashed Amman and its suburbs over the past three days, in what is seen as a boost for the Kingdom's water resources (see page 3). The effect of the weather on the Gulf war front was not immediately known (photo by Youssef Al 'Allan)

resources (see page 3). The effect of the weather on the Gulf war front was not immediately known (photo by Youssef Al 'Allan)

Iran says Iraqi planes will stay, sends medicine, food to Iraqis

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Iran assured France Friday it would not return Iraqi combat planes to Baghdad but said the anti-Iraqi coalition forces, including French troops, should leave the region for peace.

"We are against Iraq's partition," the Iranian news agency IRNA quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmoud Vaezi as telling Francois Scheer, secretary-general of the French Foreign Ministry.

"We consider the spill-over of the war as dangerous and condemn the (Western) bombing of residential areas in Iraq and destruction of its economic installations," Mr. Vaezi said.

In Paris, a Foreign Ministry official said Mr. Scheer, whose visit coincides with senior Iraqi, Algerian and Yemeni missions to Tehran, had no mandate for a Gulf peace initiative.

IRNA quoted Mr. Scheer as saying he was in Tehran to exchange views on the 17-day-old conflict. "We are ready to consult with Iran on ways of finding a solution to the crisis and on factors that can bring an end to the conflict," he was quoted as

saying. France has 10,000 troops in Saudi Arabia. Its warplanes have been pounding Iraqi positions daily for most of the past two weeks but its ground forces have not been engaged in fighting so far.

Tehran is treading a delicate line in the conflict whose main antagonists — Iraq and the United States — have been its biggest enemies since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

It has said there were no plans for joint talks with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Saadoun Hammadi, Algerian Foreign Minister Sid Ahmad Ghazali, Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdul Aziz Al Dali and Mr. Scheer.

Yemen is sympathetic to Baghdad and Algeria has been at the forefront of Arab and non-aligned mediation efforts since Iraq occupied Kuwait six months ago.

IRNA said the question of Iraqi planes taking refuge in Iran — said by the allies to number up to 100 and include some of Baghdad's best combat aircraft — came up during the Vaezi-Scheer

talks. Mr. Vaezi repeated Iran's position that it would ground any planes from either side which land on its territory till the end of the war.

On Thursday, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati bluntly rejected Baghdad's request to have its planes back in a meeting with Mr. Hammadi.

Both Mr. Velayati and Mr. Vaezi said Iran insisted on an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and the pullout of foreign forces from the region.

"On this basis we are continuing our peace efforts... we are seriously seeking ways to terminate the conflict," Vaezi said.

He said Iran was greatly concerned that the allies were overstepping the limits set by U.N. Security Council resolutions for use of force to drive Iraq out of Kuwait.

Iran meanwhile opened a bank account for cash donations for the people of Iraq, and an official said the first shipment of medicines and powdered milk was to be sent to Baghdad Friday.

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Baghdad says it still holds initiative in war

Combined agency dispatches

IRAQ SAID Friday the forces it sent to seize the Saudi border town of Khafji this week had withdrawn to their positions inside Kuwait.

It was Baghdad's first official word on claims by its U.S.-led enemies that Khafji, attacked by Iraq Tuesday night and early Wednesday, had been cleared of Iraqi forces.

Iraq's Defence Ministry newspaper Al Qadisiyah said the operation there was "proof that Iraq still holds the initiative in the Gulf war."

It also warned the allies that the force Iraq used so far in the two-week-old Gulf war was "a drop in the bucket of its huge armament potential."

A military communique, carried on Iraqi radio, said the "... units completed their withdrawal to their original positions from which they advanced towards Khafji on the night of Jan. 30/31."

Earlier Friday, a British military spokesman said more than 300 Iraqi soldiers died in fighting around Khafji, and the U.S. military said more than 500 had been taken prisoner.

The Soviet independent Interfax news agency, quoting well-informed Soviet military sources, said on Friday more than 1,500 Iraqi soldiers had been killed in the battle.

Iraqi armoured columns struck across the border from Kuwait, seizing Khafji some five kilometres inside Saudi Arabia and holding it until Thursday.

British spokesman Niall Irving said Saudi troops had succeeded in clearing Khafji of Iraqi forces except perhaps for "the odd sniper or so."

Al Qadisiyah said: "Iraq's military calculations in the battlefield and its use of available potential will provide further surprises in the war areas. The enemies must expect this at any moment and hour and at any place on the battle ground."

Iraq has reported a large number of American and allied casualties in the battle at Khafji and that an unspecified number of prisoners taken, including all nationalities in the allied forces and some American women soldiers.

Allied spokesmen say that only 11 American marines were killed at Khafji and that one American woman soldier was missing.

In other developments: — Saudi Arabia said more than 400 Iraqi soldiers were captured in fighting at Khafji.

— U.S. B-52 bombers are using a base in Spain to launch Gulf war raids over Iraq, Spanish radio reported.

— Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, in a U.S. television interview, predicted that the Gulf war may last another month at the most unless some surprise development occurs.

— Allied bombers pummeled a 17-kilometre column of tanks moving towards Saudi Arabia and another Iraqi attack appeared imminent, according to press reports from the front.

— One Iraqi Scud missile fired at Turkey would be sufficient to warrant Turkish reprisals, President Turgut Ozal was quoted as saying.

— Allied planes bombed Iraq's second largest city Basra and three towns in southern Iraq, the Iranian news agency said.

— U.S. Vice-President Dan Quayle said he expected Iraq to unleash chemical warfare during the Gulf war and refused to rule out nuclear weapons in response.

— All 14 crew members of a U.S. AC-130 plane are missing after crashing behind Iraqi lines in Kuwait, a U.S. military spokesman said.

The plane, the attack version of the familiar Hercules cargo transport plane, went down Thursday in south-east Kuwait, Brigadier-General Pat Stevens told a daily military briefing.

"All 14 crew members are listed as missing," he said.

A four-man marine investigative team is trying to determine whether some of the marines killed in the battle with Iraqi troops earlier this week were victims of misdirected friendly fire.

Marine Lt.-Col. Jerry Humble said that the team included a munitions expert who will examine the bulk of the light, armoured vehicle in which an unspecified number of marines were killed.

"We're saddened and disappointed" about the possibility

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Politician advocating 'transfer' given seat in Israeli cabinet

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir is waging a far-right party that advocates the "transfer" of all Palestinians from the occupied territories.

Mr. Shamir confirmed on Friday negotiations were underway between his ruling Likud Party and the two-member Moleider (Homeland) party headed by retired General Rehavam Zeevi.

Israel's Haaretz newspaper said Mr. Zeevi would become a minister-without-portfolio and join the inner cabinet responsible for defence policy.

It would boost Mr. Shamir's majority to 66 seats in the 120-seat parliament, reducing his vulnerability to small parties in the coalition. It would make unlikely the formation of any "national unity" government with the opposition left-of-centre Labour party.

Mr. Zeevi has criticised Israel's policy of restraint under Iraqi missile attacks in the Gulf war, openly calling for immediate retaliation.

"The government's policy will

not change because of the inclusion of anyone, any party," Mr. Shamir told reporters. "The government's policy is strong and will continue as it is today."

However, Mr. Zeevi vowed to use a cabinet post to promote his policy of "voluntary transfer" of 1.75 million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Liberal critics of Mr. Zeevi say transfer is merely a euphemism for expulsion. The Kach party founded by slain rabbi Meir Kahane was barred from parliament as racist for advocating expelling Palestinians and Israeli Arabs.

The move is bound to arouse concern in the United States, Israel's guardian ally, which could view Mr. Zeevi's inclusion as an obstacle to post-Gulf war peace efforts between Israel and the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, a German air force plane carrying antidotes for chemical weapons and other medical aid landed on Friday with the first shipment of a \$670 million package to strengthen Israeli de-

fences.

The airlift, expected to continue next week, will include a battery of eight Patriot anti-aircraft missile launchers and Fox armoured cars equipped to detect chemical weapons.

Germany's ambassador to Israel, Otto von der Gableutz, said his government's decision to rush the aid to the Jewish state was a departure from its policy of not supplying weapons to a region involved in conflict.

Germany decided last week to aid Israel's defence after being stung by charges that German firms and technicians helped develop Iraq's chemical weapons and the Scud missiles that have hit Tel Aviv and Haifa.

Israel, awaiting its moment to hit back at Iraq, issued a warning to Jordan Friday.

Air force commander Major-General Avihu Bin-Nun said Jordan would "lose everything" if it attempted to prevent Israeli aircraft crossing its airspace to retaliate for Iraqi missile attacks.

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Gulf oil slick splits, compounds efforts to fight it

BAHRAIN (Agencies) — The mammoth oil slick off the Saudi Arabian coast is breaking into pieces, overwhelming efforts to fight it, oil and shipping industry executives said Friday.

"It is becoming too dangerous, demanding massive effort and equipment to track and combat so many more pieces," said one of the sources. "It's a terrible situation."

U.S. military officials meanwhile said they feared a second spill was growing off the coast of Iraq.

U.S. air force Major Linda Lyons at the military command in Riyadh said the second spill now covered an area 7.4 kilometres by 2.4 kilometres in the vicinity of Mina Al Baker by the Iraqi coast at the head of the Gulf. It also was breaking up, she said.

The first spill began last week, when Iraqi forces in Kuwait allegedly opened the taps at a Kuwaiti oil terminal, dumping an estimated 11 million barrels into the sea. The Iraqis blamed the incident on allied bombing.

On Saturday, U.S. F-111 fight-

er bombers attacked part of the terminal, apparently stemming the flow of crude.

Western salvage executives said the war so overshadowed the spill that there seemed to be no urgency on the part of Saudi Arabia and other governments to obtain the necessary oil booms and other equipment.

"Environmentalists are up in arms, but that's about all," one said.

A shortage of the equipment could prompt the closure of some vital desalination plants, which turn sea water into potable water. The plants provide two-thirds of the drinking water for Arabian Peninsula's 18 million people.

Saudi authorities are deploying double rows of booms and skimmers at the nearby port of Jubail, where two large desalination plants, a 250,000-barrel-per-day refinery and a huge petrochemical complex are located.

Oil industry sources said the steps should avert a major disaster but desalination plants at the port providing three-quarters of the drinking water for Riyadh

might be forced to close or reduce production.

If that happened, Saudi Arabia might ration water in some areas, they said. Water from underground wells — which already provide at least a third of the country's water needs — could help compensate for the loss.

Carrying an estimated 11 million barrels of crude — 460 million gallons (1.7 billion litres) or the equivalent of three super-tanker cargoes — the massive slick is likely to wreak havoc on marine and bird life in the shallow waterway for decades.

Saudi authorities say they have postponed trying to protect fish spawning grounds or islands where rare sea turtles breed because the main priority is to keep vital industrial assets working. There are islands rich in birds, fish and turtles near Jubail.

Seasonal currents normally flow southward down the Arabian Peninsula but can reverse for one or two days with fluctuations in winds direction.

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Non-aligned group plans peace initiative

Combined agency dispatches

A GROUP of 15 non-aligned countries will meet in Belgrade Feb. 11 and 12 to launch an initiative for ending the Gulf war, Tanjug news agency said Friday.

The agency quoted Foreign Ministry officials as saying the conditions were favourable for an initiative to stop the war. It gave no details.

Foreign Minister Budimir Loncar of Yugoslavia made several trips to the Middle East to try to prevent the war breaking out.

Tanjung said the 15 countries, including Algeria, India, Iran, Venezuela and Yugoslavia, would

seek ways of "eliminating the cause of the crisis and gradually settling all problems in the region."

Indian Foreign Minister Vidya Charan Shukla arrived Friday for talks with Chinese officials expected to focus on international efforts to end the Gulf war.

Mr. Shukla and his Chinese counterpart, Qian Qichen, agreed during talks Friday afternoon that their two countries would continue working for a peaceful resolution to the Gulf conflict, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Mr. Shukla told Qian about his recent trips to Yugoslavia and

other non-aligned nations to try to find a peaceful end to the war, the report said.

A spokesman at the Indian embassy said Gulf peace initiatives under discussion by Third World countries would be the main topic during Mr. Shukla's six-day visit. From China, Mr. Shukla will travel to Belgrade to continue discussions on the Gulf crisis with officials from Yugoslavia, Venezuela and Algeria.

The U.N. Security Council has heard the Gulf war denounced for the first time, with Yemen accusing the allies of trying to obliterate Iraq's armed forces and technological capability.

Cuban Ambassador Ricardo Alarcon said Thursday he "is concerned also about the thousands of women and children of both sides in this conflict who, even now, are losing their lives without the council doing anything to stop this."

Yemen and Cuba have been striving for over a week to open a public debate on a ceasefire in the widening Gulf conflict.

The council decided again Thursday to choke off that attempt, and has no plans to meet again in the near future.

But when the council met briefly to extend the Iran-Iraq peacekeeping force until the end

of February, the Cuban and Yemeni ambassadors saw their chance to inject some quick, brief criticism of the Gulf war effort.

Yemen's Ambassador Abdulrahman Saleh Al Ashtal said: "These war operations have gone beyond our view of Resolution 678." "The resolution authorities 'all necessary means' to drive Iraq out of Kuwait."

"What we are witnessing today is closer to an attempt to destroy the military and scientific operations of Iraq than an attempt to liberate Kuwait," he said.

At the request of Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia

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Shelling duels continue on 'new front in Gulf war'

RASHAYA, Lebanon (Agencies) — Israeli and Palestinian guerrillas fought shelling duels in South Lebanon for the fourth straight day Friday in what the local media referred to as the "new front in the Gulf war."

Police said Israeli gunners manning U.S.-made 155-mm and 175-mm Howitzers lobbed 300 shells into the Palestinian-controlled hills of Iqlim Al Toufah, southeast of Sidon overnight.

Palestinian guerrillas responded at 1:30 a.m. (0230 GMT) by unleashing 13 Soviet-designed Katyusha rockets at Israel's self-proclaimed "security zone" of South Lebanon.

A casualty report was not immediately available from the attacks. Police failed to identify the

Palestinian group that launched the 107mm rockets.

An anti-armour mine also exploded under a truck operated by the Israeli-affiliated South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia early Friday. One militiaman was wounded, according to police.

The attack was reported near Jezzine, a town in the central sector of South Lebanon linked to the "security zone" with a narrow land salient.

Major-General Yossi Peled, head of the Israeli army's northern command, said Israel would not be dragged into prolonged fighting in the buffer strip of South Lebanon that Israel controls with SLA allies.

"They (the Palestinians) have stepped up a notch in terms of escalation. It should be clear that we don't intend to be dragged

into a gradual escalation but that we will end it, and immediately," Gen. Peled told Israeli Radio.

Israeli artillery earlier pounded Iqlim Al Toufah area and Rashidiyeh refugee camp north of the "security zone" in south Lebanon.

Two people were wounded, houses were set ablaze and half the residents of Rashidiyeh were forced to flee the camp some 20 kilometres north of Israel due to the Israeli shelling, Lebanese sources said.

The Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation, a television station, referred to the escalating Israeli-Palestinian confrontation in South Lebanon as "the new front in the Gulf war."

The Palestinians have not directly linked the anti-Israeli attacks to the Gulf. However,

they have repeatedly threatened to escalate attacks against Israeli targets to retaliate for the allied attacks against Iraq.

SLA militiamen ambushed a Palestinian guerrilla squad in the "security zone" Thursday, killing three guerrillas. Two SLA militiamen were wounded.

Gen. Antoine Lahd, commander of the 3,000-strong SLA, threatened in a statement Thursday to change South Lebanon into "scorched earth" if the guerrilla attacks persisted against the "security zone."

Israeli and SLA gunners also shelled Palestinian strongholds in South Lebanon Thursday, killing three people and wounding 10. The guerrillas responded by unleashing 30 Katyushas at the "security zone" and Gen. Lahd's command said no casualties were

reported. The confrontation in South Lebanon broke out Tuesday with Palestinian guerrillas targeting the "security zone" with 30 Katyushas.

Israel retaliated the same day sending their gunboats, helicopter gunships and howitzer batteries pounding Rashidiyeh in the southern Tyre region for 70 minutes. Two people were killed and nine wounded.

On Wednesday, the shelling duels persisted, but no casualties were reported.

Israel is separated from Palestinian lines in South Lebanon by the 1,100-square-kilometre "security zone" which it carved out upon withdrawing the bulk of its invading army from south

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Earthquake kills 99 in Afghanistan and Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Agencies) — A powerful earthquake jolted Afghanistan and Pakistan before dawn Friday, killing at least 99 people in both countries and injuring more than 125, officials said.

Officials said many of the victims died in their sleep when their dried-mud houses crumbled during the minute-long tremor, which struck at 1:04 a.m. (2304 GMT Thursday).

Authorities said the death toll was expected to rise as reports from remote areas of the two countries arrive.

The quake registered 6.8 on the Richter scale, which is considered severe. A quake of such a magnitude is considered a major earthquake, capable of widespread, heavy damage in populated areas.

The northern areas of Pakistan were hard hit. State-run television reported Friday night that at least 95 people were killed and hundreds of houses destroyed.

Most of those killed lived in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, about 610 kilometres from the quake's epicentre in Afghanistan, said the Associated Press of Pakistan.

The tremor rattled windows in the capital of Islamabad and sent frightened residents running into the streets.

Afghanistan's official Kabul Radio reported that at least four people were killed and about a dozen injured. It said scores of homes were destroyed and some

government offices damaged. Among the hardest hit were Afghan refugees living in squalid camps throughout the Northwest Frontier Province.

More than three million Afghan refugees fled to Pakistan after 1979 when the Soviet Union intervened militarily in their homeland. They are scattered throughout the Northwest Frontier Province in tent villages and dried-mud homes.

"We rushed emergency assistance to the remote areas around Chitral," about 320 kilometres from Islamabad, said a government official in the area, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"People were praying and running outside their homes," he said.

The quake began in Afghanistan's Hindu Kush Mountains and rumbled across the Soviet Union's central republics, Pakistan and parts of India. There were no reports of casualties by Soviet or Indian authorities.

Sixteen people died in remote Chitral district bordering Afghanistan, 12 in the Bajaur area, nine in the Malakand area and 11 in Swat district, the officials said. Hundreds of houses had either collapsed or were damaged.

The death toll was likely to mount, they said. Relief teams had been sent to the stricken areas but access to remote mountainous regions was difficult.

The earthquake, measured at 6.8 on the Richter scale, was the

worst in Pakistan for many years. The region is frequently shaken by tremors which can do severe damage in villages where most of the houses are mud brick.

A 1974 quake measuring 6.3 killed 5,200 people in the region. Last October 25 a quake measuring 6.6 killed 12 people.

Islamabad and several other Pakistani cities as well as the Afghan capital Kabul were shaken by the strong tremors.

The quake jolted northern Pakistan before dawn, sending residents in Islamabad and near-lying Rawalpindi into the streets when their houses shook for some minutes.

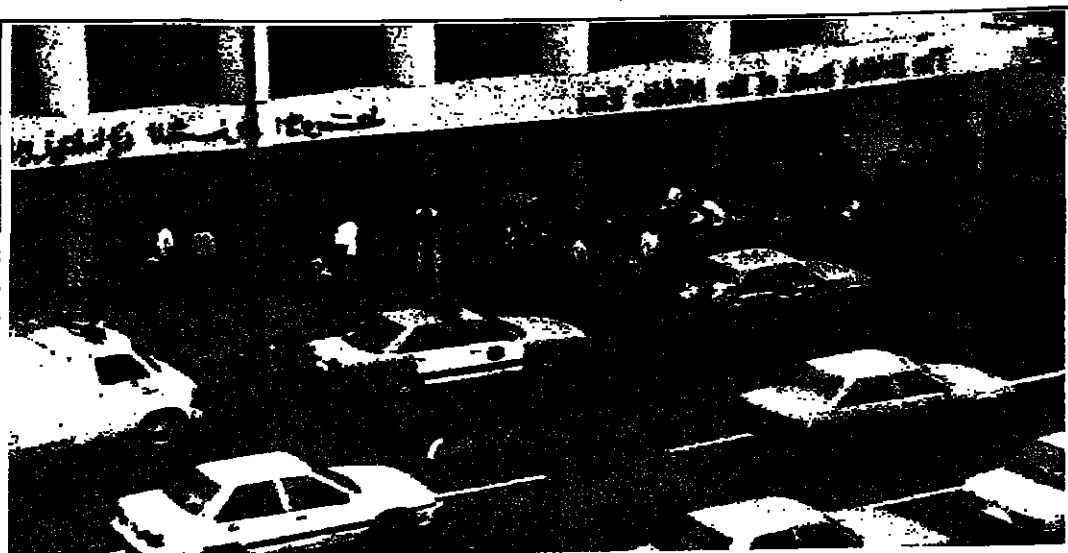
Residents of Kabul were awakened by the tremor which lasted about 45 seconds, witnesses said. Some damage to roads and buildings was reported, with cracks appearing in walls and roofs.

Reports reaching Kabul said the earthquake was felt over wide areas of northern and eastern Afghanistan.

The Soviet TASS news agency said tremors destroyed houses, triggered landslides and brought down power lines in villages around Khorog in the Soviet southern republic of Tadzhikistan.

But it added there had been no immediate reports of casualties.

Quakes measuring more than six on the Richter scale — a gauge of energy released by an earthquake — can cause widespread, heavy damage.



GRENADE THROWN AT BANK: A hand grenade was thrown at an Amman branch of the British Bank of the Middle East Friday damaging a nearby car, a police spokesman said. The explosion broke the windows of a passing car, gonged a small hole into the pavement but caused almost no damage to the bank which was closed for the Friday

holiday. A guard outside the bank fired shots at the attacker who fled in an old white car, the police spokesman told the Jordan News Agency, Petra. Police removed a phony bomb from the same bank last week. Shots have been fired at the U.S.-owned Citibank in Amman.

Gulf war is against people and should be stopped — peace activists

By Mariam M. Shahin
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — "The overriding value of human life and human values must prevail and with it peace," is the message that an 86-member Gulf Peace Team has brought out of Baghdad after witnessing some of the fiercest air bombardments in history.

"As a person I reject the 24-hour bombing of Iraq and the president of the United States has no right to declare war in the name of the world community," Junsie Terasawa, a peace activist from Japan, told reporters less than 12 hours after his arrival here from Baghdad Friday.

Along with over 80 other peace activists arriving from the war zone, Terasawa, a Buddhist monk, expressed anger and regret over the outbreak of war on the morning of Jan. 17.

Stressing that theirs was a non-partisan approach, the peace activists said they blamed all those who had promoted war directly and indirectly for the outbreak of the war.

"If they can wage war I can wage peace," said American peace activist Andrew Jones referring to the American-led allied forces in Saudi Arabia. "Let's save life. Let's act like human beings," Mr. Jones, an African-American, told a press conference.

Gulf Peace Team members have been in Iraq since mid-

December. Following the outbreak of the war, they were able to get a clear firsthand view of conditions in Baghdad.

"There is obviously a lack of basic medicines," said Karen Khan, an Indian member of the peace team. "In the hospitals there is no water to clean the sheets," she said with tears in her eyes as she recounted what she saw in Baghdad.

While many members of the peace group did not say Baghdad is "devastated" or that all of the Iraqi capital was in "ruins," most said that civilian areas had been hit.

The bombing of a milk powder factory outside the city was also confirmed by several eyewitnesses. One British member of the delegation, Pat Arrowsmith, said jokingly that members of the team had used left-over milk powder from the attacked milk formula factory for their tea.

The teams were asked to leave their peace camp at Ar'ar on the Iraqi-Saudi border after the war began. Most of the peace camp members were taken to Baghdad.

Housed on the now famous Al Rashid hotel, the peace activists spent most of the time in the bomb shelters listening to the city being bombed.

"What we saw when we were not in the bomb shelters was red lights in the dark sky," said a 27-year-old Indian woman, who had arrived at 5 a.m. along with

the rest of the delegation.

The road from Baghdad to Amman had suffered a lot of damage, according to witnesses. "The stretch right in the centre seems to have suffered the worst bombing," said Esa Borman, 80, from Germany. "The poor drivers had to manoeuvre around the holes in the craters in the street," Mr. Borman, the oldest member of the peace team, told the Jordan Times.

It was peace camp participant John Liversee from New Zealand that made perhaps the most emotional and controversial statement at the news conference. "We were at the mercy of the Iraqis and we had to trust them and you can trust the Iraqis because they keep their word," he told the news conference.

Many of the peace activists spoke of the kindness shown them by Iraqi citizens. "They were among the kindest people I have ever seen anywhere," said Ms. Borman, who walks with the help of a cane.

"This war is being waged against ordinary people without the consent of ordinary people and it must be stopped," said Kathy Kelly of the United States.

Wrapping up the kaleidoscope of ideas and trends represented in the peace team, musician Joseph Parsons said: "We came to promote peace and putting our lives on the line we came to say that we will not stand by to watch the world destroy itself."

Baghdad

(Continued from page 1)

of deaths caused by friendly fire, said Col. Humble, operations officer for the 1st marine division. "But historically there's always casualties by friendly fire in close battles because it's a fight for your life."

In a radio appeal on Friday, Iraq urged Arabs to join the battle and show the "enemies all forms of contempt and hate."

"Arab brother... stab the nation's enemies in any way you can. Do not let them rest. Do not let them see anything except the glint of your knife."

"Your Iraqi brother is confronting countless armies with composure and intrepidity. Such armies have never before assembled against one country as they have assembled against Iraq. Nevertheless your Iraqi brother is standing like a lofty mountain, unshaken and fearless," Baghdad Radio said.

The radio referred to Iraq's resistance to thousands of allied raids "without complaining... losing vigour or relaxing" but added that fellow Arabs should help it in the war with the "evil forces."

"All you have to do is take the first step. All you have to do is to begin. No one, no one can possibly make such a stand except you, Arab brother," it said.

Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

ensure fair treatment of allied pilots captured by Iraq.

The Swiss-run relief agency also hinted that it knew more than it was willing to say about the scale of destruction in Iraq after 15 days and of nights aerial bombardment.

Angelo Gnadinger, head of the ICRC's Middle East division, said the Red Cross delegation in Baghdad had so far failed to visit any captured allied pilots.

Iraq also said Friday it had shot down 20 "air targets," the term it uses to refer to aircraft and missiles of the U.S.-led forces.

Baghdad Radio, quoting military communique 54, said the enemy had carried out 94 air raids against it from Thursday night.

"Our heroic air and ground defences were able to shoot down and destroy 20 air targets, both planes and missiles, today," said the communique.

Earlier on Friday, Iraq said its air and ground defences had shot down three allied planes.

Baghdad said it has downed more than 200 air targets since the outbreak of the Gulf war Jan. 17. Its foes say they have lost 25 aircraft.

Baghdad Iraqi Radio said Thursday that President Saddam Hussein visited the southern battle front Wednesday night and remained there until early Thursday morning.

The radio said that during the visit, President Saddam met with Defence Minister Saadi Tumah Abbas and "assured himself of the soundness of the measures and arrangements" and of the "growing morale" of his forces.

Reuter correspondent Bernd Debusmann, reporting from Baghdad on the 16th day of the war, said two weeks of allied air attacks have turned life in Baghdad into living hell.

Every day had become a battle for life's basic necessities. There was no power, little water. The telephone system had been knocked out and even government ministries could not talk to one another.

Fuel was scarce and some motorists spent the night outside filling stations, wrapped in blankets against the bitter cold, to gain an early place in the queue.

Iran

(Continued from page 1)

Tehran Radio reported. Iranian officials decreed Friday the "day of compassion with the innocent people of Iraq."

The day coincided with the 12th anniversary of the return from

exile of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, under whose leadership Iran fought the brief 1980-83 war with Iraq.

The head of the Iranian army, in a sermon at Tehran university Friday, slammed President George Bush for ordering allied forces to attack military targets in Iraq.

"Bush says he does not want to destroy Iraq, but these are empty words," Ayatollah Mohsen Yazdi said.

Yazdi said mass prayers worshippers in Tehran should "Death to America" and "Death to Israel" Friday.

"It could have had an Islamic character if it was led by a leader of Muslims. But this war of aggression. It began aggression and it continues aggression," he said.

He warned that "we are just observers of the scene. A neutral doesn't mean Iran should remain silent against such an on Iraq."

Ayatollah Yazdi praised efforts of the Red Crescent Commission, for trying to help people of Iraq.

Vahid Dastjerdi, head of Red Crescent, said five other border provinces would also aid to the Iraqi people. These days are living under difficult conditions.

He said the first shipment of medicines and powdered milk, infants, was to be sent to Iraq Friday, with help from the Red Cross.

Mr. Dastjerdi added that sugar, tea, canned fruit, dates would be sent in later shipments, and that his organisation was prepared to send clothing the need arose.

"If the war is prolonged, eventually the needs of the Iraqi people will become greater, and the Red Crescent will not be able to handle them single-handedly."

"As always we will call for help from our dear people," he added and gave the number of a bank account where cash donations could be sent.

Shelling

(Continued from page 1)

Lebanon in the summer of 1983. "The shelling which lasted from 8 p.m. last night until 4:30 in the morning is heavier than we have had in recent years in this part of the world," said Timor

Goksel, spokesman for U.N. peacekeeping forces in the area. A Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who has strongly backed Iraq in the Gulf war, has denied that he ordered the attacks which Palestinian sources in Lebanon said were intended to match Iraqi

Scud missile attacks on the Jewish state.

Oil slick

(Continued from page 1)

The large islands of Abu Ali connected to the mainland by a causeway blocks the way to Jubail, but if the slick is not far enough out to sea it will swirl around and hit port facilities.

Iraq blamed the disaster on allied raids on its tankers and oil pipelines.

'Transfer'

(Continued from page 1)

"We believe and hope that if we have to act, the Jordanians will know the limits. We hope they will not cross this boundary because if they do, they will lose everything," Gen. Bin-Nun told Yedioth Aharonoth newspaper.

"We need to (fly over Jordan) in order to save time... to accomplish our mission," he said. Asked what Israel would do if Jordan did not understand, Gen. Bin-Nun replied: "There will be no Jordanian air force."

Mr. Shamir said Friday that Israel's armed forces were waiting for the go ahead to strike.

"We do not have a policy or philosophy of restraint... our army awaits the order to repulse the attacks."

Refugees report rising morale among Iraqis

By Dilip Ganguly
The Associated Press

RUWEISHED — Refugees arriving from Iraq said Friday that reports of battlefield victory had boosted Iraqi morale.

Iraqis celebrated when Baghdad Radio reported Iraq's success in capturing the Saudi Arabian city of Khafji Thursday, according to several people arriving at this desert border post.

"The aerial attack on Baghdad had affected the morale of the people, but Khafji has changed everything," said A.M. Abhyankar, manager for an Indian construction company in Baghdad.

But Mr. Abhyankar said he had not heard later reports of allied forces recapturing the Gulf coast city — news not reported by Iraqi broadcasters.

"There was jubilation in Bagh-

dad when the Iraqi army went in" to Khafji, said Azraq Mohamad, a Sudanese factory worker from Baghdad. "Iraqis were saying that this is the beginning of defeat of Zionist and imperialist forces."

"The Iraqis are certainly taking a pounding, but there is no indication that they are going to give up," said another Indian, Gurbachan Singh, an official of a construction company working in Mosul.

"I spoke to many Iraqis and they somehow believe that the war is going in their favour," said Mr. Singh, who comes from Amritsar.

K.V. Navare, an engineer from Bombay, said he believed the Iraqis could withstand aerial bombardment for at least two more months.

"Average people are concerned and frightened, but Iraqi officials and the popular army

(militia) men are not concerned at all," he said.

Refugees on Friday only trickled into Ruweished and into the Red Cross transit camp where many spend their first night in Jordan.

By midday, about 115 Indians, 70 Egyptians, 60 Sudanese, one Yemeni and one Moroccan had entered Jordan.

Aid officials warned before war broke out Jan. 17 that as many as 750,000 refugees might flood into Jordan, repeating the deluge of more than 800,000 who came after Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait.

"We are prepared to receive 15,000 a day at the two transit camps, but it is certainly intriguing that people are not coming," said Peter Fierz, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross at the camps.

Non-aligned

(Continued from page 1)

and Sudan, Cuba and Yemen have tried for over a week to open a public debate on the Gulf war.

They were rebuffed again Thursday by the majority of the council, which decided in private not to meet on the Gulf in the immediate future, diplomats said on condition of anonymity.

"Our sense is that the members of the council are clearly going to continue to keep their interest in this very high," U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering said.

"But at this point (they) don't see any further action can be taken until Saddam Hussein indicates that he's ready to comply with the resolutions" demanding that Iraq withdraw its troops from Kuwait and restore the emirate's government, he added.

Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar told reporters after the adjournment: "I think a meeting of the council is something which needs consideration and my hope is that the council will meet and discuss the subject as soon as possible."

MOSCOW (AP) — Communist Party officials have warned the United States not to go beyond the U.N. mandate to liberate Kuwait, reflecting concern among Soviet traditionalists that America wants to impose its will on the Mideast.

"We call upon the leadership of the United States to take more necessary measures so that they serve the cessation of the bloodshed, and serve the ceasefire," said Alexander Dzasokhov, the party's ideology chief and member of the national legislature's Foreign Affairs Committee.

His statements Thursday echoed a joint U.S.-Soviet communique issued this week saying a ceasefire would be possible if Iraqi President Saddam Hussein made a commitment to withdraw from Kuwait.

The 500-member central committee approved a statement urging the U.S. government to limit its objectives in the Gulf war.

Soviet officials so far have not directly said support for the allied mission in the Gulf would be withdrawn, but major newspapers have editorialised against an escalation of the conflict.

Foreign Ministry spokesman

Vitaly Churkin said this week that the Soviet Union, while urging constraint, stands by the U.N. Security Council resolution authorising the Gulf action.

In Washington, U.S. officials said the Kremlin had promised to continue its support for the U.S.-led war in exchange for a White House pledge to "back off" its tough line against the Soviet military crackdown in the Baltics this month.

Mr. Dzasokhov and other Communist Party officials addressed a news conference before reports of the deal reached Moscow.

But Mr. Dzasokhov did seem to link the Baltic crackdown and the Gulf war.

"It is a time for responsible actions for the sake of preserving civil peace" on the domestic front, Mr. Dzasokhov said. "And on this basis rest two... of our strategic aims. It is quite understandable that the central committee paid considerable attention to the problems connected with the Persian Gulf and the situation there."

Soviet officials, mindful of their longtime Iraqi allies and fearing a powerful new U.S. presence in the Middle East, have

expressed concern that U.S.-led forces planned to destroy the Iraqi government, rather than just drive Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

"We must not sacrifice the just aim of respect for the rights of all people. We must not let the Iraqi people be punished for a policy they did not choose," said Valentin Falin, chief of the party's international department, told the news conference.

Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh, in an interview with the Communist Party daily Pravda published Thursday, said his talks with U.S. President George Bush this week touched on the Gulf and the Baltics. But he did not say whether the two issues were linked.

"The West merely wanted to give a signal about its dissatisfaction with the developments" in the Baltics, he told Pravda.

The U.S. sources, speaking on condition they not be identified, said an unannounced agreement between Mr. Bessmertnykh and Secretary of State James Baker led to the joint statement on the Gulf. U.S. officials also received assurances the Soviets would withdraw some troops from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

PRAYER TIMES

05:56 Fajr
06:23 (Sunrise) Duha
11:48 Dhuhr
14:48 'Asr
17:15 Maghrib
18:30 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifeth, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrence Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

It will be cold, cloudy and rainy, with expected snow in hilly areas. In Aqaba, it will be partly cloudy and there will be a chance for scattered showers of rain.

Mis./max. temp.
Amman 2 / 5
Aqaba 6 / 15
Deserts 3 / 8
Jordan Valley 1 / 12

Yesterday's high temperature: Amman 6, Aqaba 19. Humidity readings: Amman 97 per cent, Aqaba 27 per cent.

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Khalid Klob 626919
Dr. Fayez Jalouza 624207
Dr. Khalil Abdel Qader 743292
Dr. Ahmad Al Nator 632934
Firm pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778236
Al Asena pharmacy 676265
Nairothk pharmacy 625672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630541

REPAIRS

Abdull Telephone Repairs 623101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 816115
Electric Power 636381
RJ Flight Information 06-53200
Queen Aila Int. Airport 06-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khaldi Maternity, J. Amn 6442816

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Aklesh Maternity, J. Amn 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Maha, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisat 664171/4
Shmeisat Hospital 669131
University Hospital 664845
Al-Mushtaq Hospital 667227
The Islamic, Abdull 666127/7
Al-Ash, Abdull 777101/2
Italian, Al-Mushtaq 727111/26
Army, Marika 891611/15
Queen Aila Hospital 622405/50
Amal Hospital 674135
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)91071
Bos Sam Hospital (09)986732
IRBID:
Princess Beama Hospital (02)735555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)727275
Bos Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

Apple 550 / 480
Banana 500 / 450
Beans (Mukammal) 450 / 400
Cabbage 460 / 400
Carrot 100 / 50
Cauliflower 120 / 150
Cora 300 / 250
Cucumbers (large) 200 / 150
Cucumbers (small) 150 / 100
Dates 320 / 280
Eggplant 500 / 400
Garlic 200 / 160
Lemon 1600 / 1400
Lemon 200 / 150
Mallow 180 / 120
Marrow (large) 130 / 80
Marrow (small) 120 / 80
Onion (dry) 270 / 220
Onion (green) 270 / 220
Okra 150 / 100
Orange 600 / 500
Pepper (hot) 450 / 200
Pepper (sweet) 300 / 250
Potato 120 / 80
Radic 270 / 220
Sage 120 / 80
Spinach 400 / 300
Tomatoes 150 / 100

Professors protest U.S.-led aggression on Iraqi people

AMMAN (J.T.) — Professors and academicians from Jordanian universities have expressed their solidarity with the Iraqi people now subjected to the U.S.-led aggression, and urged academicians around the world to extend a helping hand to the Iraqi people and help stop the aggression.

Donning their university robes, the professors marched from the Professional Associations Complex in Shmeisani to the United Nations offices where they handed U.N. Resident Representative Dr. Ali Atiq a protest note addressed to the United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar. Following is the text of the memorandum the professors presented to Atiq:

We strongly condemn the savage killing of the innocent people of Iraq and the indiscriminate destruction of civilian institutions and installations such as schools, hospitals, power stations and water pumps, which are the lifeblood of all citizens of all faiths and ages.

This flagrant aggression against Iraq is an aggression against all Arabs and Muslims all over the world and is directed against their culture and their very existence. It is reminiscent of the crusading spirit of the Middle Ages which can only ignite the spirit of jihad in self-defence.

We appeal to fellow academicians all over the world and to all men and women of clear conscience to support our call to stop such a horrifying and genocidal onslaught on innocent lives. We call upon them to cooperate in order to re-establish a healthy international order free from American arrogance and hegemony.

Any new order should be conducive to greater unity among nations and to greater mutual respect and understanding among the peoples of the world irrespective of race, place, or religion. As Muslims we are capable of contributing significantly to world

peace, prosperity, and progress.

The United Nations, nowadays an instrument in the hands of the United States as demonstrated by the present situation, should address the Palestinian question in order to attain peace in the region.

We pray to Allah for a safer world free from American and Zionist bombs and colonialist dreams.

The march by professors, was the first of its kind here to show solidarity with the Iraqi people; and a spokesman for the professors said that Jordanian universities will be sending messages to various academic institutions around the world to rally support for peace and to end the war in the Gulf.

The professors and academicians represented the University of Jordan, Yarmouk University, Muta University, the Jordan University of Science and Technology and the private university.

Prince Hassan calls for end to hostilities, warns against war consequences

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has called for an end to hostilities in the Gulf in order to give all parties concerned a chance to pause and consider peace initiatives.

In a televised interview with the American CBS News Network, Prince Hassan said that what is so worrying is what the future carries in terms of relationships between people and the extent of damage in the form of civilian casualties, ecological disaster, possible new waves of refugees and evacuees, economic losses, in addition to the increasing dangers of widening the conflict.

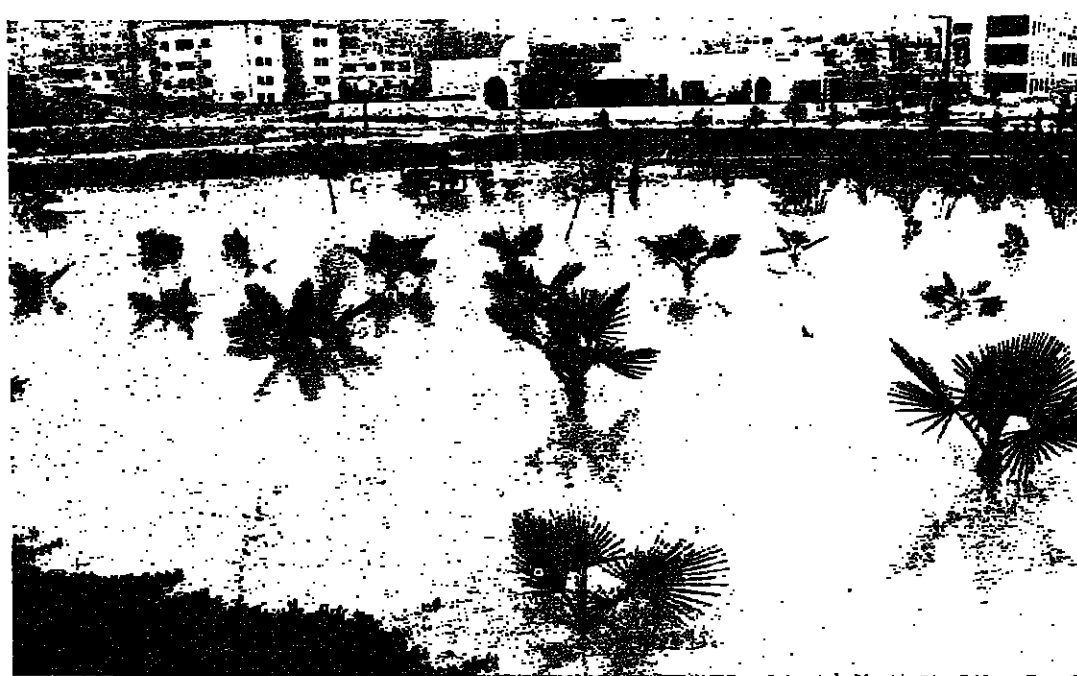
The Crown Prince noted that the Arab masses increasingly felt that Iraq stands to win in the context of a confrontation despite round-the-clock bombardment and devastation of Iraqi targets.

Prince Hassan said that in the event that non-conventional weapons were used it would be very difficult to talk about winning the peace and that is what was so worrying to Jordan. He added that "we in Jordan have called for durable arrangements to guarantee a stable new order in

our region, convening a regional conference for security and cooperation and an international peace conference for the Middle East."

However, the Crown Prince warned that it seems that the strategic relationship between the United States and Israel is very much back in play which would negatively affect peace efforts in the area. Prince Hassan added that this situation and the continued armed conflict coupled with the lack of progress towards solving the Arab-Israeli conflict, are causing deep anger in Jordan and the Arab World. The anger has become so apparent in terms of the way the public expresses itself and we feel that is very much the case in the length and breadth of the Arab and Muslim World.

Prince Hassan reiterated his call for all parties to consider a pause, supervised by the United Nations to reassess their positions and consequently try one last attempt to put an end to hostilities. Without such action, he said, it becomes much more difficult for all of us to put together a peace that works in the Gulf and in the Middle East at large.



Water floods Amman public parks (Photo by Youssef Al 'Alam)

Rain tempers Jordanians' mood

By Ella Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Despite anxiety over the continued U.S.-led aggression on Iraq, Jordanians, especially farmers, were jubilant Friday over plentiful rainfall that followed two months of a dry winter season. The rains revived hopes of a good harvest this year.

According to Dr. Ali Abanda, director of the Department of Meteorology, a series of cold fronts carrying more rain are expected to affect Jordan from now until Sunday. He said in a statement on Jordan Television that Jordan's highlands will again witness snow fall in the coming two days as the low pressure continues.

Dr. Abanda said that the cold front, originating in north western Russia, brought in rain to most regions in the eastern Mediterranean region.

According to Dr. Abanda, temperatures will fall noticeably Saturday and Sunday in Jordan

as a result of the cold fronts.

The rains of the past few days increased the amounts of water collected at the King Talal Dam to nearly 14 million cubic metres, and could rise to 16 million over the next two days should rain continue, according to Dr. Abdul Aziz Wishah, secretary general of the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA).

Dr. Wishah told the Jordan Times that the reservoir behind the King Talal Dam now contains almost double the amounts of water at the start of the rainy season; and that other dams have also collected considerable amounts of water for summer irrigation.

According to Dr. Wishah, Wadi Shueib Dam Friday morning had 750,000 cubic metres; Wadi Al Arab, 5,300,000; Karfain, two million; and Sharhabil Dam nearly 500,000 cubic metres, out of a total capacity of four million.

Dr. Wishah said that the JVA, which is responsible for irriga-

tion in the valley, had stopped all water pumping to farmlands which, he said, are now being fed by rain fall.

Dr. Wishah said that the rain covered most parts of the Kingdom even those areas which normally receive very little or no rain at all.

The King Talal Dam's overall capacity is 80 million cubic metres of water, and there is a long way to go to replenish the reservoir, but continued rain with such intensity is expected to collect sufficient water for the required dry season's irrigation, Dr. Wishah added.

The Ministry of Agriculture last week issued an appeal to farmers in the Jordan Valley, where most of Jordan's agricultural crops are grown, to embark on planting fruit trees and vegetables. Minister of Agriculture Mohammad Alawneh was quoted in Friday's Arabic press as saying that the recent rains have guaranteed good and successful plant growth.

Courses at French centre to resume 'in a few days'

By Saeda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Courses will resume at the French Cultural Centre in a few days despite an attempted attack on the centre's library Wednesday night that resulted in the burning up of around 10,000 books, few desks, bookshelves and carpets in the library room.

French language students said they will register as soon as the administration allows it. They say that the incident will not deter them "since most of the attacks on foreign interests are carried out at night and not intended to hurt anybody," one student said.

"Everything depends on the general atmosphere," Hania Sa'idi, a language student at the French Centre, says. "If they call me then I'll probably register."

Other students voiced discontent over such incidents "which will not help in anything but are directed in fact against Arab students," Butthans Haddid said. "Most of who frequent the library are Arabs and not foreigners."

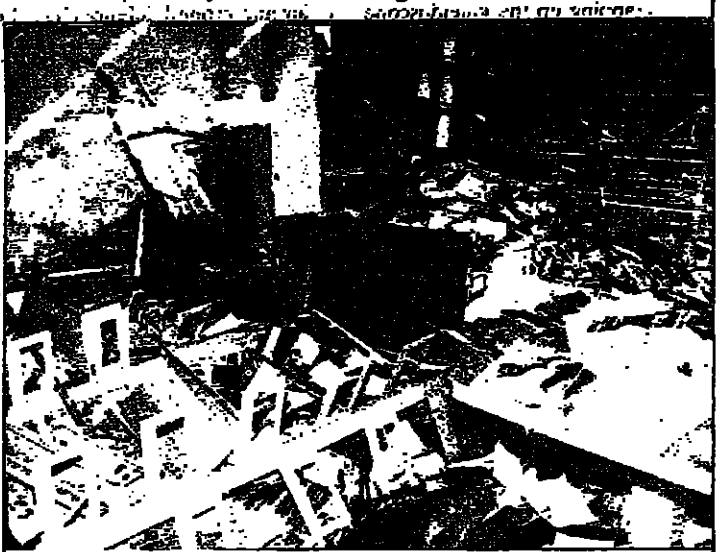
Security sources, on the other hand, are still investigating the incident which was claimed by hitherto unknown organisation that calls itself "Jihad Brigade." The "brigade" claimed responsibility for the incident in a telephone call to the French news agency (AFP). "We carried out this attack after Saddam's call for jihad against Western and

American interests," the anonymous caller told the AFP.

He claimed that his organisation was the originator of previous attempts against two branches of the British Bank that were carried out soon after the eruption of the Gulf crisis.

"The investigation is still going on," Major General Fadel Ali the director of the Public Security Department, told the Jordan Times when contacted by telephone. He did not give any further details nor did he reveal if the actual attacker has been arrested or not.

A senior official at the French Embassy said that only the centre's library was damaged.



The French Cultural Centre's library after the fire attack Wednesday night (Photo by Youssef Al 'Alam)

aged by the attack, which resulted in the burning up of 80 per cent of the books there. No other parts of the centre were damaged except for the walls of the first floor which were covered with soot generated from the fire.

The attack, believed to be a response to Iraq's call on Arabs and Muslims to attack the interests of the United States and its G-17 war allies, was executed shortly before midnight on Wednesday, at nearly 7.30, security sources said.

The attacker apparently used the centre's back door and soaked the library with gasoline before setting it on fire, leaving some unreadable graffiti in Arabic on the walls.

Japan wants direct involvement in the evacuation of refugees

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Japanese parliament wants to deal directly with the evacuee problem in Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait and to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance badly needed in view of the ongoing war in the Gulf, according to a visiting parliamentary group.

Deputy Toshio Yamaguchi told Minister of Planning Khaled Amin Abdullah that Japan, which used to deal with this problem in the past months through international organisations, now plans to have direct involvement in cooperation with the Jordanian government.

Yamaguchi told Abdullah that parliament in Japan will set up a standing committee to follow up the evacuee problem in Jordan and to discuss measures to be taken to support Jordan itself.

Visiting Japanese delegation includes four parliament members and 11 assistants and officials who Friday toured a number of evacuee camps at Al Ruweisbed and Azraq in order to have a first-hand assessment of the situation and evacuee-related problems, according to an official at the Japanese embassy Friday. The official told the Jordan Times that the Japanese parliamentarians will Saturday meet His Majesty King Hussein, and will hold talks with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Mudar Badran among other officials, focusing attention on Japan's assistance to Jordan and to the evacuees.

The group, whose members had been to Egypt, are expected to go to Syria Sunday in the course of their current Middle Eastern tour, the official said.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said discussions with Dr. Abdullah covered the adverse effects of the Gulf war on Jordan's economic and social life and Japan's assistance to Jordan. Dr. Abdullah discussed with the visiting parliamentarians the outcome of his own recent visit to Tokyo where he discussed topics related to Japan's loan to Jordan.

Following the meeting with Dr. Abdullah, the Japanese delegation called on Salameh Hammad, secretary general of the Ministry of Interior who is also head of the government-appointed evacuees welfare committee. Discussions, according to Petra, centred on the present situation in the evacuee camps, and Jordan's role to provide essential services to displaced people and facilities to help repatriate them.

Hammad told the delegation that the longer the war lasted the more evacuees were expected to converge on Jordan. He expressed Jordan's deep appreciation to the Japanese government for its continued help to Jordan to shoulder the task of caring for the evacuees.

According to the Japanese embassy official, the Japanese parliament members and their accompanying team of officials constitute what a study group that will report its findings and present its recommendations to the Japanese parliament.

Government restricts the use of private cars...

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources hopes that the public will reduce consumption of electricity which is generated through fuel oil, and will reduce the use of cars to a minimum so as to save petrol, according to Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Thabet Al Taher.

Commenting on the government's Thursday announcement that restricts the use of private cars and public buildings hearing, the minister said that the move was deemed necessary under the present difficult circumstances, and should help Jordan rationalise the use of its limited oil reserves. He said that the government's measures were also designed to encourage members of the public to use public means of transport.

The minister's comments followed close on the heels of a

government decision Thursday that as of Tuesday Feb. 5, all private motorists should be allowed to use their cars only on alternate days. Cars with licence plates ending with odd numbers would be allowed on the streets on odd days while those ending with even numbers can be used on even days, said the government order.

The order said that the use of government vehicles would be cut in half and that heating of government buildings would be reduced by 25 per cent.

Jordan has been receiving all its crude oil from Iraq since September 1990 when Saudi Arabia cut off supplies to the Kingdom. The government decision followed air raids in the past week on the international highway linking Iraq with Jordan, which so far killed five people, injured many others and destroyed a number of oil tanker trucks.

Despite the U.S. embargo on business with Iraq, the U.N. sanctions committee gave Jordan special permission to import Iraqi oil because of the hardships that the embargo had imposed on Jordan.

Foreign Minister Taber Al Massi told Parliament Wednesday that the air raids on civilians and oil tanker trucks seemed to be deliberate. The government order warned that violators of the new measure would result in impounding the vehicles. But the order to the public to use their private cars every other day has drawn angry public reactions from all sectors, and Radio Jordan Arabic service's call-in programme was Friday bombed with telephone calls objecting to the new measure.

... the public objects

By Serene Halasa and Nur Sati
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A government decision to restrict private cars to run on alternate days has met strong objection on the part of the public. The majority of Jordanians voiced total disagreement with the government's idea reasoning that the decision will result in cutting down petrol consumption.

Most of the people interviewed by the Jordan Times Friday said they would have welcomed increased petrol prices rather than be subjected to inconveniences.

One man, who preferred anonymity, told the Jordan Times that although the idea of cutting down on gasoline consumption was needed, this particular decision was not well planned. "I have four children who go to school and my wife works, now I have to find a way to send them to school and to ensure that my wife gets to work too, and this means I have to use taxis and spend a minimum of JD 5 a day (JD 150 per month)," he said. He added that this new plan would force him to wake up earlier than usual, and leave work early so that he could guarantee transportation for his wife and children.

His wife, called the decision an ill-planned initiative. "Other modes of transporta-

tion in the Kingdom have decreased because a number of them are being used to transport evacuees from the (Ruweisbed) border (post)," she said.

"I believe that the amount of gasoline consumed by taxis would equal that a person would consume when taking the same trip," another man said. He added that taxis might consume larger amounts of gasoline since many of them were Mercedes.

"This new law benefits the rich not the poor," a woman, Ayshah, told the Jordan Times. She explained that while rich families have more than one car, the lower income families have one and sometimes none. "This means that those who depend on taxis for their transportation, will have a harder time getting them because of greater demand on taxis," she said.

Ayshah stressed that low-income families with only one car normally spend less money using their own car than what they would have to spend now following the government decision. "I am worried that all my money would be spent on transportation, leaving me penniless before the end of the month," she said. She added that she feared, that her husband's salary would also be spent on transportation leaving them in economic disposition.

A pregnant woman was furious over the decision. "What

I supposed to do if I went into labour at midnight?" she asked.

"And what if my doctor's car cannot be driven on that day? Who is going to deliver me... the government?" she said angrily.

"I don't think that this plan will work out, like many ill-thought initiatives," a young man, Aref, said, explaining the decision does not serve its purpose because it causes unneeded inconvenience.

Despite the large outcry from the public, the majority of the people interviewed by the Jordan Times, expressed a need to ration gasoline consumption, but gave other alternatives.

"Why doesn't the government regulate certain hours and days, for the operation of gasoline stations," a man, Abu Ahmad, said. For example the station can operate three times a week from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, he added.

Another woman suggested using coupons that would be submitted with a family book, in order to curb any kind of foul play (like the selling of coupons).

A third idea was to raise the prices of gasoline. "This would automatically reduce the kingdom's consumption of gasoline because now people would be more careful when using their cars," a woman said.

Scientists urge de Cuellar to end Gulf war to avert ecological disaster

AMMAN (J.T.) A group of 11 prominent scientists have appealed to the United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar urging him to seek a ceasefire in the Gulf war in order to avert the region an ecological catastrophe caused by oil spillage in the Gulf and possible oil fires in that region.

Following is the full texts of the scientists' letter:

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

We turn to you once again, as the man who heads what was first conceived as the most noble arena for the resolving of the world's woes after military initiatives had devastated humankind, hoping to rekindle the spirit of peace with which the United Nations and within it the Security Council came to be, according to the U.N. Charter — beyond human and bureaucratic boundaries and vested interests.

Following two scientific symposia, one in London and the other in New York, where we voiced our very real fear of severe ecological crisis should a war in the Gulf erupt, we now find, as the world's largest oil spillage has occurred in the Gulf, that our predictions were not without foundation. We warned of the environmental threat posed by any spillage to marine life, the fishing industry, the coral reefs and significantly the desalinisation

plants throughout the Gulf states, upon which all rely on for their daily fresh water.

We are particularly concerned that should the war escalate and a ground battle over the oil fields of Kuwait commence, a far greater ecological threat lurks. We examined several scenarios should the oil-wells, storage tanks, refineries and pipeline networks be subject to direct military action or deliberate sabotage.

We now have one last chance to stop and assess the actual damage — besides the oil slick, the damage caused by the destruction of nuclear reactors and chemical facilities is yet unguessed — preliminarily we should know the extent of environmental damage to innocent civilians in their immediate vicinity. Oil fires in southern Kuwait must be stopped before they spread north into Kuwait proper and untold environmental damage is caused. As a result of prevailing winter winds in the southern Iraq and Kuwait area, masses of smoke and soot from the fires sweep to remote regions such as the Indian sub-continent in a matter of days and interfere with the Monsoon circulation system influencing their character and duration. Any perturbations or freezing will effect hundreds of millions of lives that depend on these annual rains for their agricultural crops

and could face starvation if the rains do not arrive in season. Acid rains and toxic clouds could also spread devastation.

Our commitment to the U.N. and UNEP was evident from the discussions we held. As the realisation of our greatest fear materialise we plea for a pause in hostilities to take place immediately, allowing for a full assessment of what could begin with regional disaster (ecological and economic — as we have warned) within the tight ecosystem of the Gulf region and end with a catastrophe of incalculable proportions, both for ourselves and future generations. Any international efforts towards preliminary environmental repairs, made in this state of military confrontation, can only be makeshift.

We ask you to make all member nations aware of the risks and plead for a meeting of the General Assembly and Security Council in order that proper assessments may take place.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Frank Barnaby, Dr. John Cox, Dr. Abdullah Toukan, Dr. Paul Cousseau, Mr. Joe Ferman, Dr. Carl Sagan, Dr. Tim O'Riordan, Dr. Bernard Lown, Dr. Paul Rogers, Dr. Josef Rothblat, Mr. Richard Goleb.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

House water committee meets

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament water strategy committee will hold a meeting today to discuss issues pertaining to the water situation in the Kingdom.

JRC, WHO coordinate

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan Red Crescent's director Ahmad Abu Qoura Friday met World Health Organisation (WHO) regional advisor for external coordination Ashour Gibril. Abu Qoura and Gibril discussed JRC's needs for medical supplies under the prevailing circumstances in this region. Gibril expressed WHO's readiness to meet these needs and praised JRC's humanitarian role in regard to taking care of the evacuees leaving Iraq and Kuwait since Aug. 2.

Jaljouli visits the injured

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Health Adnan Jaljouli Thursday visited patients at Al Hussein Medical Centre injured in the U.S. and allied aggression on Jordanian oil tankers last week. The minister wished them a speedy recovery and praised the standard of the medical services being given to the injured.

Brotherhood delegation to visit Tehran

AMMAN (Petra) — A delegation representing the Muslim Brotherhood is due to leave for Tehran. The delegation, which includes parliament deputy members of the Islamic Movement and is led by the Muslim Brotherhood's secretary general Mohammad Abdul Rahman Khalifah, will meet with a number of Iranian officials to discuss the American-led aggression against Iraq. The delegation is also expected to visit Turkey and Pakistan for the same purpose.

Jordanian students in Iraq OK

AMMAN (Petra) — All Jordanian students studying at Iraqi universities are in good condition and none had been hurt as a result of the U.S. and allied forces aggression on Iraq, a cable sent by the Jordanian cultural attache in Baghdad said. The cable was addressed to the Ministry of Higher Education.

Jordan Times

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Support for the war: Is U.S. ready for testing it?

WASHINGTON and its close allies are no longer in an upbeat mood about the Gulf war. In spite of over two weeks of the heaviest ever bombardment of Iraqi and Kuwaiti civil and military centres and targets, the Iraqi backbone has not been broken as projected at the commencement of the Western offensive in the Gulf. Each passing day takes the West further and further away from easy and early victory that was heralded as imminent at the start of the war. At best there is now a military stalemate. The only thing that the Washington-led offensive has achieved is to wreak havoc, death and destruction and exacerbate the already volatile situation in the area. After turning down North African, Non-Aligned and other initiatives calling for a ceasefire in the Gulf war, the only remaining option now are either to pursue this mad and crazy war till the bitter end or resort to another international forum to put in place a cooling-off period in the ongoing fighting in order to provide more room for reflection and positive thinking. It was said before and it has to be said again that the U.N. General Assembly should be convened immediately for this purpose. U.S. President George Bush is only kidding himself when he maintains that his war enjoys international support. In fact, the only participating countries in the war are the Western countries. Everything else is only cosmetics that add or subtract nothing. If Washington, London and Paris truly believe that their war is internationally popular, they are invited to put that claim to the test by taking the Gulf crisis to the U.N. General Assembly where it would have a truly international chance to be aired and addressed.

The Americans and the Soviets can, in the same breath, present their joint communique to the international body to see what kind of response to it they will be getting from the world community. This can be done assuming that the Americans themselves have not changed their own mind about the joint statement that was signed by the U.S. Secretary of State and his Soviet counterpart.

But if the U.S. is not ready for peace yet, there will come a time in this war when they will have to weigh their losses and decide whether their whole adventure has really been worth it.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

IN VIOLATION of all international principles and laws and the 1949 Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians in war, the U.S. and allied forces raided civilians travelling along the international highway from Iraq to Jordan killing innocent people and destroying property, said Al Ra'i Friday. The raids on the civilian targets, the paper said, are clearly part of the ongoing aggression on the Arabs, and considered as a link in a long chain of acts of atrocities and brutality now being committed by the allied forces in the Gulf region. The raids occurred on Jordanians and Jordanian oil tanker trucks at a time when the allied forces realise that Jordan is totally committed to the sanctions imposed on Iraq by the U.N. Security Council, and know that the targets were civilians, the paper noted. Jordan has committed itself to the sanctions and the resolutions, and has also been exerting efforts to find peaceful solutions to the problem, said the paper. As a reward for its commitment and for its endeavours to achieve peace, the paper noted, Jordan has been the target of allied bombers, resulting in the death of innocent Jordanian civilians. It said the raids looked as though the allied forces wanted to expand the war and to involve Jordan in the hostilities, causing further destruction and sufferings for people in the Arab World. Undaunted by the raids the paper said, Jordan will not budge from its present peaceful stand and will continue efforts to bring about peace to the whole area.

Al Dustour Arabic daily Friday attacked Germany for immediate and prompt readiness to provide Israel with weapons, thus siding by the enemies of the Arab World and endangering the strong ties of friendship with the Arabs. The paper said that Germany first showed its hostile attitude towards the Arabs by providing funds to the allied forces to buy weapons to kill the Iraqi civilians, and now it is hurrying to the side of Israel, providing it with modern and sophisticated equipment to help it consolidate its hold over the occupied Arab territories which it has been occupying since 1967 in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions. The paper said that the German government has violated the German constitution for the sake of responding to the needs of its friends in the West and Israel, but it is the same government which declined to sell Saudi Arabia modern weapons some years ago under the pretext that it could not violate the constitution. We deplore the German action as a clear hostile move towards the Israelis and against the Arabs at a time when Israel is making ready to launch aggression on Iraq, the paper said. It said that the Arabs regret to see German succumbing to the Zionist pressures and complying to the whims of the United States.

View From Amman

'Allah yustur allaina': May God protect us

AS I listened to the president of Iraq's interview with the American CNN network on the night of Jan. 30, 1991, I was struck with the idea that the man truly believes that he is defending the Arab cause. The following question came to mind and should be addressed to those Arabs still unmoved by what is going on, the spectators as well as those involved in the kill, "is adding years to one's life as important as adding life to years?"

The question is not a philosophical one nor is it idle speculation no more than the musing of a curious mind but indeed touches on the heart of the matter: What will be the future of the Arabs, at least for the next few decades, should Iraq be pulverised as we know the "allies" are planning to do? And this too is not in defence of Iraq's annexation of Kuwait, but a quick glimpse of a future that promises to be grim indeed.

Since this latest crisis erupted on Aug. 2, many Westerners have faulted our analysis of its causes. They claim that while we lay all the blame on the West, we have nothing but apologies and praise for ourselves. Nothing could be further from the truth: A truth driven deeper in me as I listened to President Saddam explain himself and his nation. The widening gap of misunderstanding was not only between the Arabs and the West, but amongst us Arabs as well. And while the cultural gap between the Arabs and the West was evident in the interview as when President Saddam spoke of the concept of shame, evidently of different meaning to the two cultures, it is our lack of understanding of ourselves, our political and our limits that I wish to discuss.

If this crisis made anything evident it is that we have not yet matured as a nation; not politically at any rate. After almost a century and a half since our modern so-called renaissance and the attempt of our intellectuals to coalesce us into one nation, we remain no more than tribal warring societies overridden with

fractionalism and easy to penetrate from outside. The fragile Arab system that we thought we had built in the last few decades fragmented, even disintegrated when the first real test occurred: The Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab Cooperation Council melted into thin air and were immediately replaced by the Dorian Grey reality of a tribal system, each an oasis into itself.

As such the decision was immediately removed from our hands and in fact we have become, wherever we may be at the moment vis-a-vis this crisis mere pawns moved at the will of others and responding to exterior stimuli. The horror of our present situation is not only that we have been marginalised but that the marginalisation is such that we have become of no consequence at all. Not only did we discover that Western colonialism, classic and otherwise, has not really left the region but that most of us in fact enjoy and even invite that condition. With few exceptions most Arab states were no more than protectorates and this notwithstanding the trappings of modern statehood that we once thought we had.

Our state system as it turned out is in fact no more than a pre-modern, pre-nation-state simple tribal society system that attempted, in most cases clumsily and hastily to camouflage themselves in modern garb. A system that revolved essentially and in most cases around one man and his almost personal entourage including sometimes an army and security apparatus.

Some of us were deluded and we thought that we had left this dark cave of pre-historic existence. One shocking byproduct of this crisis is that when President Saddam turned on the light to reveal what we truly have, most still do not believe what they see. And though most know that the fig leaf they hold is too thin and

tattered to conceal anything they still cling to it for dear life, manufacturing excuses as the developing circumstances require. And so it is that to our Western friends, we hope that we still have some, we say that we know that the worm inside is just as dangerous, even more debilitating than the monster facing us from the outside. However, we still cling to the apparently mistaken hope that someone, in the words of President Saddam may have same shame, or mercy.

But then why should we expect others to understand when we ourselves do not try. In our jeremiad labyrinthine thinking we still hope that we can hide our life. And until this day, and in spite of all the calamities that continue to befall us, we still try to hide the truth from ourselves. One of the nicest wishes that we continue to make for each other, *Allah yustur allaina*, God protects you (fills) make for each other, in two worlds at the same time; one for public covered as if we live in two worlds at the same time; one for public display and the other private. And masters at self-delusion that we are having learned the trick over millennia of one civilisation replacing another, we continue to invent excuses. Is it the tyranny under which we lived for the past few millennia that causes this undisciplined lawlessness of the self, almost the selfishness of emphasising the "I" above all else that continues to stimulate us to exist the way we do: from day-to-day never looking to the future beyond?

These are bewildering questions that sear the soul and burn the heart. They need however to be looked into otherwise how can we explain our behaviour now ranging between mere observation on the one hand and active participants in our own mass suicide on the other. Nor are these questions another exercise in self-flagellation but a tentative reaching out for ways to get ourselves out of the jungle of our life.

The CIA president and Israel

By V.F. Ayoub

these twilight diplomats prance before cameras, like Salome before Herod, to reap attention.

The questions that require answers are why Mr. Bush's behaviour so inflexible virtually from the beginning and throughout the five months of the crisis, until he made the decision to attack Iraq? And, why was that behaviour given such unquestioned public support by his cohorts in the coalition? Why was it not possible to delay the ultimate decision to permit sanctions more time? What set of circumstances required such an intransigent stand as Mr. Bush made against any negotiation whatsoever?

His position appears to have been so programmed from the outset that when finally the two main adversaries met, in the persons of the United States secretary of state and the Iraqi foreign minister, Mr. Bush felt the need repeatedly to insist that it was only to inform the Iraqis about what they had been told for months and which they had just amply rejected. Put another way, why did Mr. Bush find it necessary when he did, refusing all other possibilities, to make the decision that it was right for Americans and Iraqis and others to die?

Blood for oil? A powerful motive. Oil, as coal before it, undergirds the character of Western civilisation, such as it is. However, there were many analysts, able to speak with authority, who refuted the idea that our vital interests were so hazardously at stake that war was the only option open. Moreover, waiting patiently for sanctions to work did not threaten oil supplies. The loss of the Kuwaiti and Iraqi wells was made up. On the contrary, Mr. Bush has put in jeopardy those vital interests. His actions have informed Arabs that they are meant to be the vassals for his "way of life," notwithstanding his own self-selected Arab cohorts. There is an Arab saying: "The dog of the sheikh is a sheikh." Mr. Bush's Arabs may come, themselves, to learn its meaning one day.

Blood for principle? That is even less credible. When oil, jobs, and economy proved less than convincing for his intractable behaviour, Mr. Bush latched on to an incontrovertible principle: he would not reward aggression. Commendable. Of course, the United States has, itself, permitted aggression to stand, a considerable reward, all too frequently. It has been rewarding Israel since at least 1967. Ironically, the United States declared this principle explicitly in the Israeli case, even as it was prepared to breach it. To this day, the United States State Department regards the West Bank and Gaza, including East Jerusalem, as "occupied territories," and has voted in the United Nations on resolutions based on the premise that land acquired by conquest was illegitimately acquired and could not be held. Rightly so. The State Department had linked the Palestine and Kuwaiti issue before the Iraqis had even mentioned it.

Mr. Bush did not apply a principle; he stonewalled. The matter of principle cannot be defended on the basis of selective application. Principle transcends self-serving. The double-standard, so grossly applied, does not support the idea of principled behaviour.

There is, moreover, another reason to cast a doubtful glance at this president's invocation of principle. At one point, rewarding aggression was defined to include simply acceding to negotiation prior to full withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. There might be an occasion when it would be reasonable to consider such a gesture rewarding. However, when the consequence of a stalemate breakdown only by war could be a catastrophe of unpredictable dimensions, the idea that accepting the offer to negotiate without preconditions would, in itself, be rewarding is an arrogant one. It is Mr. Bush's stubbornness, not his principles, which have brought us to where we are. This has still to be explained.

Finally, blood for Israel? Is the insight into Mr. Bush's unbending will to be found here? It might not be thought so. The present administration in the United States has not been known for the same warm relations with the Israeli government that were enjoyed by the Reagan administration. No chemistry between president and prime minister. The United States Secretary of State James Baker had the "chutzbah" to be flippant at a congressional hearing some time ago, when he suggested that the Israelis knew his telephone number if they wanted to talk, a remark a proud man must later have regretted, because shortly afterwards Baker had publicly withdrawn the implication of what he said. Senator Robert Dole and occasionally others have had similar experiences. After an audacious effort to criticize Israel, each has had to yelp an apology, badly disguised as a demurral that he was misunderstood. On the surface, there is nothing promising here to suggest answers to our questions.

Some other explanation is needed, something that lies hidden from the surface but can be elicited through reasonable conjecture. There are two reinforcing hypotheses which do focus on Israel and do, I believe, account for Mr. Bush's behaviour throughout this Gulf confrontation between the United States and Iraq. They also indirectly account for the behaviour of his coalition cabal. None of the other reasons for diverting Iraqi designs on Kuwait, in spite of their relevance, required the war option, required absolute objection to negotiations and required rejection of continued delay to allow sanctions to do the job. To be sure, these hypotheses are probably supplemented by explanations derived from actions and attitudes which begin to foster over a prolonged period of any crisis. These are secondary, however, reinforcements only, such as the development of personal animus or self-deception when you begin to believe your own propaganda. But, the crucial clue to explain the implacable Mr. Bush is provided, I think, by Israel, the superpower's superpower. A silent partner in the coalition.

Support for Israel, alone, required the war option, because Mr. Bush faced an Israeli threat on two fronts. This is the premise of my double hypotheses. First, Israel had a self-serving interest in forcing the issue of Iraq even before the invasion. It felt threatened and had expressed fear of Iraq's growing power. After the invasion, Israeli officials took the opportunity, with considerable self-satisfaction, to say, "I told you so." Months before the invasion, Israel had sounded warnings that Iraqi power would soon need to be destroyed. That Israel forced the issues by simply threatening to attack Iraq itself is not an unreasonable hypothesis.

Israel's fears, which will not allow it to tolerate any power in the region equal to or greater than its own, would have encouraged it to take such an initiative, even if its military knew, as it probably did, that the might of Iraq would be greater than it could itself handle alone. A unilateral strike on its part could have sparked another Israeli-Arab war, from which neither Egypt nor Syria could easily have remained uncommitted. At which point, the United States would have been required to aid Israel under conditions less advantageous to it, either politically or militarily, than the present situation allows.

Faced with such a threat, the United States would have had to move along several fronts: (1) To provide political justification for a confrontation with Iraq; (2) To isolate Iraq within the region as well as outside, and (3) To locate the military confrontation where the Iraqi border would be directly accessible and where a large force could be easily mobilised against it. These manoeuvres, aimed towards the destruction of Iraqi military power and its infrastructure, would be the necessary steps to take in response to Israeli pressure to do something.

To what extent the United States may have lured Iraq into the present crisis in order to create the situation above remains an open question. There is evidence of orchestration before the invasion that has never been denied. There is the communication between President Saddam Hussein and the American ambassador in Iraq, who, since the early days of the crisis, has remained strangely incommunicado; and there is the letter sent from Brigadier Fahd Ahmad Al Fahd to Interior Minister

Sheikh Salem Al Sabah referring to a secret meeting with CIA Director William Webster during which complicity to act politically and economically in concert against both Iraq and Iran was discussed. ("Iraq unveils 'secret letter on Kuwait-CIA conspiracy'" Jordan Times, Oct. 31). The failure that has been attributed to the intransigence of the Kuwaitis at the Jeddah meeting may well be connected with this complicity. The CIA has never denied the letter nor given an explanation for it.

The intervening months between the invasion and the onset of hostilities exhibited a choreography of actions and counter-actions, responses and counter-responses, that seemed intent on locking onto the war option. Aside from his first remarks after the invasion, President Bush took an unyielding posture. The first resolution demanding withdrawal set the tone for his dealings with Iraq; only this and the final resolution setting the war deadline. If Iraq refused to comply with the first, had any direct relevance to Iraq. The remaining ten resolutions might better be viewed as serving to keep the coalition intact and filling the necessary time gap that would make the extreme of the final resolution compatible with the first.

During that same interval, Iraq matched its own tactics to those of its adversaries by playing a game of "tit for tat." Iraq made an initial offer of negotiation quickly and then began to act with like-mindedness in response to coalition moves led by the United States. The insistence by one or another coalition member on nothing less than full withdrawal immediately would provoke the Iraqi response that Kuwait was its nineteenth province and would remain so forever; any hint of flexibility from a coalition member and Iraq would repeat its offer to negotiate on all issues. In the process, however, the issues Iraq included as part of any negotiation and their priority broadened to shift the focus to Israel. As a result, Mr. Bush's rigidity at the beginning prevented him from moving anywhere but in the direction of the war option.

However, Israel could not be sure that any time during the interplay of events in the five months before the war began that President Bush might not lose his nerve, might not "negotiate a deal." In the early stages of the crisis, two columns, Charles Krauthammer of the Washington Post and William Safire of the New York Times, unwavering supporters of Israel, with thinly disguised antipathy to Arabs, expressed concern that Bush might not maintain his firm stand against Iraq. Kissinger (also, an "unwavering" though more circumspect), who was among the first to advise war, became concerned at the first announcement that James Baker would meet Tariq Aziz. He appeared to think that the clever Iraqi foreign minister might be more than a match for the secretary of state, with the result that Iraq might escape the destruction of its military power. President Bush has not been admired for his steadfastness in the past. How then might his steadfastness be insured, to reinforce the pressure from the threat of a unilateral strike by Israel, with all its unwelcome consequences?

President Bush came into office vulnerable. As the first CIA president, his name has been linked with covert activities the full stories of which remain untold. The Iran-Contra affair, The Noriega connection. At the least, Israel has had a "special relationship" with the United States since its establishment. Among other things, that "special relationship" has included covert support of United States interests in the world. Israel trades where "angles" — self-appointed keepers of the world order — fear to.

President Bush could well have had Israel's past, present and future contributions in mind when he recently vetoed a House of Representatives Intelligence Committee Bill regulating direct and indirect covert activities, the latter referring to those engaged in by other countries on behalf of the United States. He did so because the bill set some restrictions on indirect covert action, although the disappointed committee chairman said that the committee had in mind only to insure that "the same standards apply to covert operations whether they are carried out directly or indirectly."

The president, on the other hand, could not accept the bill's legal limitations on indirect covert activities because it could "seriously impair the effective conduct of our nation's foreign relations (and could) have a chilling effect on the ability of our diplomats to conduct highly sensitive discussions concerning projects that are vital to our national interests" (Bush Vetoes Intelligence Bill, the Jordan Times, Dec. 2, 1990). Both he and the Israelis should know. Nothing crude, of course: the barest hint would suffice.

Would Israel dare to jeopardise "a special relationship"? Israel has dared to spy on the United States; it has dared to attack a United States vessel; it has also dared to "divert" a supply of uranium from the United States to its own shores. The full story of these escapades, and others, has never been made public. There is little to restrain the country from daring; government suffers from an immune deficiency syndrome problem. The United States government, one might say, has AIDS. It cannot stop aiding Israel, at any cost; nor is there a foreseeable cure. Truly it is a "special relationship," and a strange one as well.

At this point, an interlocutor might say, "My, what a wild imagination, something of subtlety a Len Deighton or Robert Ludlum thriller — a conspiracy theory," hinting, if not at total irresponsibility, then at a seriously flawed mental state. The double hypotheses I have outlined to suggest a conspiracy at work: a conspiracy theory. There is truth in this, but not one which more truth than that there are such things as conspiracies. It is well-documented that Western "democracies" have rampantly involved themselves in conspiracies for their own ends over many years in the Middle East, not to mention in other parts of the world: the most celebrated among them have been against Nasser's Egypt and Mossadegh's Iran.

More importantly, the argument for this conspiracy has been presented so as to be refutable. Cautioned by an increasing number of knowledgeable and respected Americans and others as the crisis progressed, the president of the United States nevertheless refused any option but war. Why? That has been the only issue here. My hypothesis conjecture an answer: they are falsifiable. The evidence — "the highly sensitive to confirm or disconfirm them is not available only because it is hidden behind the lies, evasion and fabrications which shape the public face of 'secret diplomacy'."

It remains, of course, that "blood for Israel" may be acceptable to the status of the hypotheses here offered. There is certainly no evidence to the contrary. The anti-war demonstrations going on at present do not appear prominently during the crisis. Nevertheless, in a democracy a people's absence. And political decisions should reflect the conscience of an informed polity. It is the people's right to fight and die for, and to ask what that cause is and the justice of it must be made clear.

A democracy cannot wait for the revelations from archival dustbins and autopsy. A democracy deserves better.

It is therefore, important to demonstrate, even if it cannot be proven, the plausibility of any cause which may be supported only by the political

(Continued on page 5)



Iraqi President Saddam Hussein laughs at a news paper cartoon shown to him by William Brown



A scene from the devastation caused by the allied raids on Baghdad

'World has not seen anything yet in Gulf'

Iraqis have 'quite a few surprises in store' for allies," says American activist

By P.V. Vivekanand

Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — AS things stand today, the Iraqis will never bow to the West and all prospects are that the Gulf war would continue indefinitely unless the allied forces agree to negotiate with Baghdad, according to an American activist who spent 30 days before and 15 days after the outbreak of the war in the Iraqi capital.

"The resolve of the Iraqi people is so strong that while they do not want war, they will rather fight and die than bowing to Western domination," said William Brown, of Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

"They may not have water, power and communications, but they are willing to live with it and die for the cause," according to Mr. Brown, who fought in Vietnam before being discharged on medical grounds in 1971 and piling up truck driving as an occupation.

Mr. Brown, who arrived in Amman in September and patiently waited for two months and 19 days before securing a visa to visit Iraq, is convinced that not only the Iraqi leadership but also the "common man on the street believes that the Iraqis are not fighting a war for Iraq but for the entire Arab World."

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein met with Mr. Brown on Jan. 12, three days before the expiry of a deadline set by the U.N. for Iraq to relinquish Kuwait.

"It was the day when (U.S. Secretary of State James) Baker was supposed to show up in Baghdad for talks with President Saddam," recalled Mr. Brown. "Instead it was me whom the president met."

"Isn't strange that a common man from the streets of America could visit Baghdad

and discuss peace when the administration was discussing some of the most devastating means of waging a war against Iraq?" asked Mr. Brown.

"President Saddam is quite a striking man," Mr. Brown recounted his impression of the Iraqi leader. "He has a high sense of humour, he is very understanding and he knows exactly what he is doing and planning to do."

The Iraqi president did not want war, but, "if he is pushed against the wall, there is no doubt that he will use every means at his disposal to hit back; there cannot any doubt whatsoever about it," Mr. Brown emphasised.

'He made it clear to me that he did not want war, but also that he would not stop at anything and hit back with everything he has if he is pushed against the wall'

During his 45-minute meeting with President Saddam, the issue of Kuwait was not discussed at all, Mr. Brown said.

But the president appeared to be very humoured over a cartoon which depicted Mr. Baker arm-wrestling with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz.

The cartoon, which appeared in a Jordanian paper, had Mr. Baker saying with all his might "Jan. 15 — the deadline" and Mr. Aziz pushing his arm down saying "19th province" — a reference to the Iraqi claim to the emirate.

"President Saddam thought it was really funny, and burst out laughing," Mr. Brown said.

The Vietnam veteran believes that the allied forces are in for a long conflict with the Iraqis despite the Western superiority in technological warfare.

"The world has not seen anything yet," he commented. "The Iraqis have quite a few surprises in store for the allies, who would not know what hit them in the days to come." He refused to elaborate.

One of the key themes Mr. Brown, the last American to meet the Iraqi president before the war, discussed in Baghdad was a proposal to set up an independent, "genuine" news network for hometown newspapers, radio and television stations in the midwest of the United States.

"These organisations are flooded by the biased reporting

thing as would hit back with everything he has if he is pushed against the wall," he said.

Mr. Brown, who moved into the now famous Al Rashid hotel on day one of the war, said he resisted repeated Iraqi urgings for him to leave.

"I wanted to see for myself what (U.S. President George) Bush could do to a people who have expressed their desire for peace on honourable terms, justice and fairness away from colonialism, domination and tutelage," he said. "And I saw plenty." "I have taped every air raid on Baghdad," he said.

"In the first few days, I have seen how the allied forces hit targets with high precision bombing," he said. "But then they turned to civilian targets which have no strategic value whatever, and I think the only objective of such attacks was to demoralise the Iraqis."

"But what these merciless hammerings have done to the Iraqi people is to enhance their unity and resolve as well as their determination to persevere," according to Mr. Brown.

"I moved around extensively in the streets of Baghdad and everyone I met told me the same thing: they did not want this war, but since it had been imposed on them they are not going to back down. They are going to fight to the finish."

Mr. Brown, who did not get a chance to visit Kuwait despite repeated attempts, said he knew of at least four babies killed as a direct result of the bombing.

"Two of them — at the Saddam Hussein Children's Hospital, which is a training facility — died when their incubator failed because of power shortages, and the other two died in the damp, cold bomb

shelters," he said.

Mr. Brown also visited a baby milk plant which was destroyed in two separate attacks. "The U.S. military said it was a biological weapons plant," he recalled. "I toured the entire plant for several hours and all I could find there was milk cans, baby formula and dry powdered milk."

During his stay in Iraq, Mr. Brown also met with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. "Mr. Arafat reaffirmed that peace will continue to elude the Middle East as long as the Palestinian problem is hanging in the air with no just and comprehensive solution," he said.

"He also pointed to how the world could condemn Iraq in a few hours after its takeover of Kuwait while it kept a blind eye towards Israel's occupation of Arab territories for 23 years."

Mr. Brown believes that the media, particularly television networks, are trying to "pull the wool over the Iraqi eyes" by arguing for TV presence in Iraq to cover the war.

'These merciless hammerings have enhanced the Iraqi people's unity and resolve and determination to persevere'

"They are telling the Iraqis that they want to convey the truth of what is going on in Iraq in an objective manner. But what had happened to their keen desire for truth and objectivity during the five and a half months before the war?" Mr. Brown asked. "I don't think that they have had a sudden stroke and revival of their sense of justice now to rectify the situation."

"I told the Iraqi officials, believe in. That is not a pacifist approach."

some of whom I met yesterday (Wednesday) night before my departure from Iraq, that they should not allow themselves to be manipulated by the media," he said. "They too realise it and understand the situation."

Mr. Brown plans to work on the proposed news network when he gets back to the United States. "I do not know who will finance it, but it will not be the Iraqis at any rate," he said. "If I accept Iraqi financing, then my argument for truth and objectivity will immediately be countered by some of my own people."

Mr. Brown said he travelled on an Iraqi government bus from Baghdad to the border along with members of a peace team which stayed at a camp near the Iraqi-Saudi border.

"At the border I opted to continue on my own, and luckily I found a driver from Salt who knew me from the day I attended a peace rally in the town on Nov. 24," he said. He explained that he was "not a member of any peace team, nor do I advocate peace for peace's sake since I believe in fighting to the end for what I

decision-makers and a supporting minority. The latter is the way of oligarchy.

Finally, a leader, a democratic leader, must have the strength of will to protect the people from his own worst inclinations. Mr. Bush's unyielding will from the beginning and throughout the crisis, against a basic concept of diplomacy, means that he failed to understand this principle of democracy. The CIA president should not be forgiven for that.

1. Grendel by John Gardner

2. An Arab proverb.

The writer V. Ayoub is a visiting professor at Yarmouk University. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

Pro-Iraqi fervour puts Maghreb states to the test

ALGIERS (R) — Pro-Iraqi sentiment sweeping North Africa has strained government control of the streets from Nouakchott to Tunis and breathed new life into the leftist and Muslim fundamentalist opposition.

The challenge has been strongest in Morocco and Algeria, the first two Arab states to have denounced Iraq's August invasion of Kuwait, where governments are hard pressed to contain popular demand for aid to Iraq's war effort.

More than 60,000 supporters of the opposition Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) marched through downtown Algiers on Thursday to express their readiness to die for Iraq and demand early parliamentary elections.

Morocco's King Hassan, the only Maghreb ruler to have sent troops to join the U.S.-led coalition fighting Iraq, has bent to popular pressure and authorised for the first time a mass pro-Iraqi demonstration set for Sunday in Rabat.

Both Algiers and Rabat are anxious to preserve vital economic and diplomatic ties with the West and Arab governments allied against Iraq, but neither can ignore the depth of popular support for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Pro-Iraqi fervour has been fuelled by economic resentment against the West and intensified in recent years by the emergence of a united Europe across the Mediterranean. The trauma of French colonial rule is still fresh in the minds of millions of Maghreb Arabs.

King Hassan, after denouncing the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait and sending 1,500 troops to Saudi Arabia, has since referred to President Saddam as "dear brother" and authorised Moroccan Red Crescent collections of blood and donations for Iraq.

Leftist opposition parties already fired up by December riots in the central city of Fez by unemployed youth have spearheaded demands for the withdrawal of Moroccan troops and the shipment of blood, food and medical supplies to Iraq.

Muslim fundamentalists are expected to join Sunday's rally in Morocco but, with their party banned and mosques under tight surveillance, they have been

forced to keep a low profile.

In Algeria the FIS, winner of last June's local elections, has jumped back to the forefront of political life after slipping last year into a morass of administrative and economic problems in the towns and cities in runs.

The war has been a political disaster for liberal opposition challengers to the FIS such as the Socialist Forces Front of revolutionary war hero Hocine Ait Ahmed which recently announced the suspension of its political activities.

President Chadli Benjedid is under renewed popular pressure to call early general elections that could bring fundamentalists to power for the first time in the Arab World.

Former president and opposition leader Ahmad Ben Bella, back from a week in Baghdad under allied bombardment, launched his own campaign on Thursday to press Algeria into offering direct material support for the Iraqi war effort.

In Tunisia the government appears to have succeeded so far in channeling popular support for Iraq to its own advantage.

On the eve of the war authorities threw into prison much of the leadership of the banned Al Nahdha (Renaissance) fundamentalist movement and police have nipped in the bud daily attempts to organise pro-Iraqi demonstrations.

But Nahdha leader Rached Ghanouchi, living in exile since August 1989, recently said civil disobedience was sweeping rural areas in what he called the beginning of a revolution.

Mauritania's strong pro-Iraqi tilt, strengthened by Iraqi support in its conflict with neighbouring Senegal last year, has shielded the government from popular criticism.

But police were forced to disperse a pro-Iraqi demonstration of several hundred people last week in the capital Nouakchott, apparently fearing it could turn violent.

In Libya, leader Muammar Qadhafi also appears to have kept pro-Iraqi feeling in hand despite his own lukewarm support for the Iraqi war effort. He personally led anti-war demonstrations in the Libyan capital on Jan. 19.

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War sabotages Gulf Air expansion

BAHRAIN (R) — The Gulf war has sabotaged Gulf Air, putting a billion dollar expansion plan in jeopardy just as the airline was recovering from the eight-year Iran-Iraq war.

Gulf Air president and chief executive, Salim Bin Ali Assiyabi, took over at the carrier — the largest in the Gulf — just as it has flown into a crisis.

"We really have suffered a lot," Assiyabi told Reuters in his first interview since his appointment in January. "I think we are the only carrier that has suffered by having its operational base classified as a war zone."

Gulf Air had already been battered by the fallout of the Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces.

"Jet fuel hit the airlines in the beginning of the crisis. It was unexpected and the insurance was another hit, a very severe hit," Assiyabi said.

The outbreak of war between the Arab-Western coalition and Iraq on Jan. 17 deepened the crisis for Gulf Air, forcing it to shut down its Bahrain airport base for more than a week.

The airline had prepared for

the end of the Jan. 15 United Nations deadline for Iraq to withdraw by shifting its base of operations to the Omani capital Muscat, outside the Gulf.

Gulf Air is owned by the governments of Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The carrier has struggled to get its fleet into the air and is now reviewing whether to lease or sell some of its aircraft.

It has confirmed orders for 15 new aircraft.

Three new Boeing 767 extended-range jets are due for delivery late in 1991 and a dozen Airbus A320s are due from the European Airbus Industrie consortium in 1992-93. Gulf Air has options on another six Airbus A320s.

That buying schedule — on top of nine Boeing 767s bought over the last year — was to drive a huge expansion.

Gulf Air hoped to capitalise on the recovery of Gulf state economies after the war-related recession of the mid-1980s and launch new routes to Asia and Europe.

"We have not dropped the idea of expanding but it will be a

longer process," Assiyabi said. "Hopefully once the crisis is over things will normalise ... we will then start our plans."

Gulf Air is studying lay-offs from its 5,000 staff, some 2,800 of whom are expatriates. Assiyabi said some would be offered unpaid leave, others termination of contracts.

Its fleet is also under review. High insurance costs — as much as \$100,000 per flight for passenger cover alone — has forced the airline to continue re-aging six aging Lockheed L-1011s within the Gulf.

The aircraft are wholly owned by Gulf Air and its government shareholders are underwriting the insurance themselves.

The more costly nine 767 extended-range planes are running a skeleton service to the Indian subcontinent from Muscat and Abu Dhabi and 10 leased Boeing 737s are idle in Muscat.

Gulf Air could shed some of those aircraft.

"We are not closing the door on any opportunities that we might be getting if we felt that might release part of our fleet that we don't need at the moment," Assiyabi said.

But cancelling or delaying new aircraft deliveries would be a costly and dramatic decision for the airline, Assiyabi said.

"The whole fleet is under review but as I see the situation we are not likely to defer any of those aircraft but it is a hard decision to make to defer deliveries," he said.

The crisis has halved Gulf Air operations just as profitability was improving. It turned its first profit in three years in 1988 of 1.8 million dinars (then \$4.77 million).

The troubled times for Gulf Air may require it to go to its government shareholders for more money but Assiyabi is confident they and the airline's banks will fund its growth.

He remains optimistic the airline can weather the crisis and grow again on the back of a promised boom in the post-war reconstruction and reform in the region.

"We believe the Gulf area is safe and that once this matter is over the Gulf region is secure. We look forward to see prosperity when this crisis is over," Assiyabi said.

EC grants Jordan \$210m

By P.V. Vivekanand

Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan has been allocated around \$210 million as outright grant from the European Community (EC) and 80 per cent of the amount will be made available to the Kingdom soon, the EC delegate in Amman said Friday.

The finalisation of the allocation was made Wednesday by the EC executive commission, which also provided \$230 million each to Egypt and Turkey — the two countries, along with Jordan, are classified as "frontline" states hard-hit economically by the Gulf crisis.

Christian Falkowski, the EC delegate in Amman said the EC was keen in ensuring the stability and growth of the Jordanian economy since it sees the Kingdom as a key player in the Middle East and appreciates its role in the region.

Documentary work related to

the allocation for Jordan was prepared in coordination with the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of Jordan, he said.

The assistance is extended as compensation under article 50 of the United Nations Charter which provides for special assistance to countries adversely affected by adherence to Security Council resolutions.

"The grant can be utilised for import of goods into Jordan from any member states of the Community," Mr. Falkowski told the Jordan Times. "This should not be a problem at all for Jordan since 70 per cent of its imports come from Europe," he noted.

The assistance is mainly aimed at "keeping the Jordanian economy going," he said pointing out that focus has been given in the allocation to industrial ware and auxiliary equipment, spare parts, agricultural machinery, chemicals for plants and fertilisers, and pesticides.

Excluded from the allocation

are any imports which could be used for any military purposes, Mr. Falkowski said.

The grant, retroactive to Jan. 1, 1991, will be made available to Jordan in two tranches, the first representing about 80 per cent of the entire amount, Mr. Falkowski said.

Related documents would be forwarded to the European Council of Ministers for approval soon, he added.

"The Community is committed to extending developmental assistance to Jordan and humanitarian aid to the occupied territories," he said.

He noted that the EC had allocated \$6 million for hospitals and health services in the occupied territories and said that a fresh grant to the Palestinians living under occupation would be announced next week. He did not give any details.

The Jordan allocation of 150 million European Currency Units (ECUs) is part of a total of 500

million ECUs earmarked in the EC Commission budget.

The 12 EC members will contribute one billion ECUs to the three frontline states in addition to individual contributions on a bilateral basis.

With the EC assistance, Jordan has received or been pledged about \$500 million in response to its application to the U.N. for compensation under article 50.

The Kingdom has already received around \$250 million from the various EC member states, with Germany leading the list with about \$120 million. Non-EC donors include Canada, Sweden and Taiwan.

In addition, the Kingdom, has received \$100 million from Japan in long-term, unsecured loans and is finalising another two packages of \$75 million each under stricter terms. However, the release of the \$150 million is also contingent on a parallel loan of an equal amount from the World Bank.

U.S. banks begin to lower prime rate to nine per cent

NEW YORK (AP) — Major banks began lowering their prime rates to nine per cent Friday, slashing the key lending rate by half a percentage point within minutes of a surprise rate cut by the Federal Reserve (Fed).

J.P. Morgan and Co. and First National Bank of Chicago, the nation's fifth and 12th largest banks respectively, were the first to announce the cut, which is the second drop in the prime rate in five weeks.

They were followed by Citi-

bank, the nation's largest banking company, and San Francisco-based BankAmerica Corp., the second largest. The cut was effective immediately.

The Federal Reserve, the U.S. central bank, announced early Friday that it was cutting the discount rate — the interest it charges on loans to member banks — to six per cent from 6.5 per cent. It was the second decline in six weeks, but only the third drop in the rate since August 1986.

The Fed has been under pressure by officials of President George Bush to lower interest rates to prevent the recession from deepening. A cut in the discount rate lowers banks' cost of funds and encourages banks to lower the interest they charge on a wide variety of business and consumer loans.

A Labour Department report showing the nation's unemployment rate inched up to 6.2 per cent in January offered fresh evidence that the economy is declining.

Not only did the report, released Friday, show weakness in the labour force, the length of the average workweek as well as hourly and weekly wages also declined.

Separately, a survey of the nation's purchasing managers indicated the economy slipped deeper into recession in January. The National Association of Purchasing Management said its monthly index of economic activity dropped to its lowest level since May 1982, during the country's last recession.

The prime rate is a base used by banks for pricing a range of businesses and consumer loans, including many types of mortgages.

When the Fed cut the discount rate in mid-December, it took several days for the nation's major banks to follow suit. Initially only a handful of regional banks lowered the prime, and then only by a quarter of a percentage point.

This time, however, banks wanted to avoid criticism that they were stalling and profiting from a wide interest rate spread.

S. Arabia shuttles oil out of Gulf

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia has started shuttling oil out of the Gulf to super tankers acting as loading points in safer waters off the United Arab Emirates (UAE) because tanker owners are reluctant to sail into the northern Gulf.

Oil industry sources said Thursday three ships chartered by Saudi Arabia were off the UAE port of Fujairah and included the \$16,895-tonne Kaptan Michaelis, the world's biggest tanker previously known as the Esso Atlantic.

Iran had earlier started shuttling oil from its terminals close to Iraq in the northern Gulf to mother tankers at Lavan Island in the central Gulf, extensively used as an oil transshipment point during the 1980-88 war with Iraq.

Oil industry executives said the Saudi decision to shuttle crude may have been prompted by slack sales of its heavy grades of crude rather than threats to shipping in the Gulf.

But several countries, including India and Japan, have barred their tankers from terminals in the northern Gulf, including all Saudi Arabia's Gulf oil export outlets.

The sources said "the first mother tanker has been loaded, the first customers are expected to be tankers from India and Pakistan," an oil industry executive said.

The kingdom's Gulf oil terminals, lying close to Kuwait and within the range of the Iraqi Scud missiles, have been operating normally since war broke.

Saudi Arabia has also increased the flow of oil through its pipeline to the Red Sea port of Yanbu to satisfy buyers. But the pipeline, with a daily capacity of 3.2 million barrels, carries light crude while the bulk of Saudi exports are heavier grades.

Japanese companies with contracts to load crude have either switched to Yanbu or chartered foreign-flag vessels to pick up oil in the Gulf.

Oil industry sources said earlier in the week the kingdom's state-owned oil company Saudi Aramco had decided to supply crude from its Gulf outlets to certain Third World countries.

Ship-to-ship crude transfer operations are not extra for buyers but buyers have to pay extra for shuttling and trans-shipment costs.

Apart from Pakistan and India, the Philippines National Oil Co. is also expected to load crude off Fujairah, the sources said.

Gulf International Bank cuts worldwide operations

BAHRAIN (R) — Gulf International Bank (GIB), which is Bahrain's second largest offshore bank and is part-owned by Iraq, said Thursday it had sharply cut worldwide operations.

GIB General Manager Ghazi Abdul Jawad told Reuters the bank had laid off 30 staff in London and merged the local branch there with its London-based European operations.

It had cut its Singapore branch to a representative office and laid off 40 staff, it was closing smaller offices in Tokyo and Frankfurt but was retaining a New York branch, he said.

Abdul Jawad described the cutbacks as part of a new emphasis on the Gulf and part a response to the Gulf war.

"We are refocusing our business thrust onto this region," he said in a telephone interview. "Operations are being reduced but we will maintain our presence in London and New York."

Many offshore banking units (OBUS) in Bahrain, financial hub

in the Middle East, have been badly hit the loss of deposits and international confidence caused by the Gulf crisis.

GIB is equally owned by Iraq and the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The cuts in commercial and investment bank follow the sacking of 45 expatriate staff in Bahrain this month. Thirty were rehired on fixed short-term contracts.

GIB had 649 staff worldwide before the current cuts.

Banking regulator, the Bahrain Monetary Agency (BMA), says the assets of offshore banks fell from \$71.2 billion last July to \$57.8 billion in September 1990, after the invasion.

The number of offshore banks has officially fallen to 53 from 56 over a similar period but others are in limbo. In 1985 — at the height of the Iran-Iraq war — Bahrain had 75 offshore banks managing more than \$60 billion.

GIB has been selling assets, including a large parcel of Third World debt and marketable securities, to boost liquidity since Gulf financial markets contracted after the Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait. Abdul Jawad declined to give details.

He said GIB would still offer foreign exchange, treasury and commercial banking services to its clients. The bank was expanding in the Gulf with a new office in Muscat.

But he said the bank would no longer market or offer certain banking products to its clients in the Gulf. "We will no longer be in the syndicated credit market and balance of payments banking, we will be completely out of this business."

Apart from its shareholding, GIB has loan exposure to Iraq which suspended all interest payments after invading Kuwait.

Abdul Jawad declined to specify GIB exposure to Iraqi debt but said: "I have exposure to many countries including Iraq."

Germany raises interest rates

FRANKFURT (R) — Germany's powerful central bank shook financial markets Thursday with an unexpected rise in key interest rates to their highest level since the early 1980s.

The Bundesbank's announcement, aimed at fighting domestic inflation as the costs of German unification mount, ran counter to advice from other countries fighting to stave off recession.

The Bundesbank said it was raising its discount lending rate half a percentage point to 6.5 per cent and its Lombard emergency borrowing rate by the same amount of nine per cent.

"I am concerned this decision will not be completely understood, especially abroad," Bundesbank President Karl Otto Poehl told a news conference after a regular meeting of the bank's policy-making council.

"But this was a technical move needed to adjust to market rates," Poehl urged Germany's partners to understand the bank's top priority was to defend the mark.

"We are in a difficult period," Poehl said. "Last year was one of the most difficult phases ever for the Bundesbank with the introduction of the Deutschmark in former East Germany."

He said the central bank's monetary policy needed to prevent inflationary trends rather than react to them.

"If prices have already started to rise then it is too late," he said. Exaggerated wage demands, high government deficits and a planned tax increase would fuel inflationary pressures already emerging in Germany.

Financial markets had been expecting tighter monetary policies for some time but not at a time of such strong international opposition to higher German interest rates.

Poehl said earlier this week it would be difficult to raise rates because of the likely reaction from abroad.

Some other European central banks quickly followed the Bundesbank's lead.

The Dutch central bank raised each of its three key official rates by half a percentage point, and Austria's bank said it would boost its discount rate and its Lombard borrowing rate by half a percentage point to seven per cent and nine per cent, respectively.

Italy and Belgium said they would not follow the Bundesbank's move immediately.

But British Prime Minister John Major said Britain would reduce interest rates when the time was right. He said his government would not be able to cut rates until the differential between inflation in Britain and elsewhere in Europe narrowed.

The discount rate is now at its highest level since August 1982, when it was seven per cent. It had been six per cent since October 1989.

The Lombard emergency funding rate is now at its highest level since September 1980, when it was nine per cent. The Lombard rate had last been increased by half a percentage point to eight per cent last November.

Brazil freezes wages, prices

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — Brazilian Economy Minister Zelia Cardoso de Mello Thursday

froze all prices and wages indefinitely in a surprise bid to kill inflation running at about 20 per cent a month.

Cardoso, in a televised speech, announced the closing of banks Friday, a crackdown on financial speculation and an overnight increase in fuel prices by 46 per cent.

"The present level of price rises is not compatible with economic stability," she said.

Although the measures came as a surprise to the general public, rumours of a new economic plan had swept Brazil's financial markets earlier this week. Stock markets had rocketed by as much as eight per cent in one day as investors rushed to place their money where it would be easily accessible.

She abolished all the most common indicators used by businesses as a reference point to set price rises and wiped out at a stroke the most popular home for speculative "hot money" — the "overnight" — a short-term money market account paying interest rates of more than one per cent a day.

Businesses in Brazil's heavily protected economy had raised prices by as much as 50 per cent in the last two weeks, trying to guarantee profits for coming months in the event of a price freeze.

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De Klerk signs apartheid's death warrant; rightwingers walk out

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — President F. W. De Klerk called Friday for the "end of an era" by repealing all major apartheid laws. Right-wing white lawmakers stormed out of parliament in protest as the president spoke.

Thousands of blacks and others marched outside parliament and in cities across the country to demand the immediate abolition of apartheid and formation of a multiracial government.

De Klerk, in the speech opening the new session of parliament, said the government would propose scrapping the last three major pillars of apartheid — the Group Areas Act, the Land Acts and the Population Registration Act in preparation for its abolition.

"The repeal of these last remaining discriminatory laws will bring us to the end of an era, an era in which it was sought to deal with the reality of a diversity of peoples ... by means of discriminatory coercion," he said.

"However, the removal of discrimination and coercion does not alter the reality of the existence of a variety of peoples and communities," he said.

De Klerk's speech triggered a walkout among outraged law-

makers of the pro-apartheid Conservative Party, the official opposition party. Conservative Party lawmakers interrupted De Klerk's speech, walking out of the chamber as the parliamentary speaker roared, "order, order."

De Klerk, pausing during the walkout, appeared unperturbed and continued with his speech. State television said it was the first time in South Africa a party had walked out in protest during the opening of parliament.

"All the people of our land shall participate at all levels of government on the basis of universal adult franchise," De Klerk said.

However, he rejected calls for a multiracial interim government. He said the white-led government would remain in power until a new constitution is negotiated with the African National Congress and other opposition groups.

De Klerk called for scrapping of the Group Areas Act, which segregates residential areas along racial lines, the Land Acts regulating land ownership rights racial lines and the Population Registration Act, which makes South Africans register in separate racial groups.

He said the registration act

would be phased out as a new constitution is put into place.

"Should parliament adopt the government's proposals, the South African statute book will be devoid, within months, of the remnants of racially discriminatory legislation," he said.

De Klerk's National Party controls parliament and repeal of the remaining apartheid laws during the upcoming session appears certain.

As De Klerk spoke, at least 10,000 protesters calling for the end of the white-minority government marched peacefully through Cape Town as part of nationwide protests by black opposition groups. Many protesters wore the ANC's black, green and gold colors.

ANC leader Walter Sisulu and other anti-apartheid activists marched at the front of the chanting column as heavily armed police stood watch. Protesters carried placards calling for a constituent assembly to form a new multiracial government.

ANC leader Nelson Mandela was to lead the march, but did not appear because of doctors' concerns that it would be too tiring for him.

Thousands of blacks stayed

away from work in Cape Town, Johannesburg and other cities as part of an ANC campaign for the immediate end of apartheid.

Authorities in Cap Town and Johannesburg said many blacks appeared to be taking part in the absenteeism, but had no figures.

De Klerk's speech, coming one year after he stunned the world by promising to end apartheid, represented another major step towards his promise of sharing power with the black majority.

But scrapping the last of the apartheid laws does not resolve the country's black-white political conflict. De Klerk has stressed a new power sharing constitution will have to be negotiated before the government gives up power, but he did give few details of the system that he envisages.

He said the government would offer a plan to take the country into a future without apartheid where blacks and whites would share political power.

De Klerk said during negotiations, which are expected to take up to two years, there would be "transitional arrangements" that would give black opposition groups "a voice in the formulation of important policy decisions."

Croatia leaves crisis talks in row with army

BELGRADE (R) — Leaders of the rebel Republic of Croatia have walked out of a crisis meeting of Yugoslavia's top officials because of a row with the army.

They made clear they had disagreed sharply with military leaders at the meeting with the state president, Prime Minister Ante Markovic and presidents of the six Yugoslav republics.

Any talks on the country's future should exclude the army, they said.

Croatia, a non-Communist republic which has angered central leaders by threatening to secede, faces a showdown with the army after defying an order to detain its defence minister, who is alleged to have planned attacks on army personnel.

"We left because we had other obligations and because we felt further talks in such a spirit were pointless," Croatian President Franjo Tudjman said after arriving back in Croatia from the meeting in Belgrade.

The talks were the second of a series grouping all the country's leaders to look for a way to hold Yugoslavia together despite secessionist trends, ethnic rivalry and political rows.

Tudjman said the main point of contention was a Yugoslav Defence Ministry document published in the daily newspaper Borba Thursday, which showed the army was determined to keep Yugoslavia together and wanted Communists to be returned to power.

"We want to continue talks but our suggestion is that the army be excluded," said Sipe Mesic, Croatia's representative on the state presidency.

"Those who pursue their goals with force will cause a catastrophe primarily for themselves. The document shows that the army is imposing itself as an important factor."

The meeting continued after the Croatian leaders left but there was no immediate word on how talks went.

Croatia and neighbouring Slovenia have threatened to secede unless Yugoslavia becomes a loose, confederal alliance of sovereign states. The army and the biggest republic, Serbia, want it to be a tightly-ruled federation.

The army order for the detention within 24 hours of Croatian Defence Minister Martin Spigelj was issued Wednesday.

Slovenia demanded the resignation of Federal Defence Minister General Veljko Kadijevic and Croatian officials said their republic would ask for the army chief of staff, General Blagoje Adzic, to be replaced.

"This is a classic purge planned for Croatia. As with a lynch mob in the wild west, the focus must be one key individual — in this case Spigelj," Croatian presidential aide Slaven Letica told Reuters.

Yugoslavia has been sliding towards chaos since the death in 1980 of communist ruler Josip Broz Tito. The crisis worsened last year when elections split it into four non-Communist republics and two led by Socialists or re-named Communists.

Drug lords kill sister of Colombian ambassador

BOGOTA, Colombia (R) — Drug traffickers murdered Marina Montoya, the kidnapped sister of Colombia's ambassador to Canada, and dumped her bullet-riddled body in a Bogota street, police sources said.

Montoya, in her 60s, was found dead in the capital a week ago but her body was not identified until Thursday, they said.

In a statement, the government expressed anger at Montoya's murder by "assassins of narco-terrorism" and demanded the release of three hostages still held by the traffickers.

The killing of Montoya, kidnapped at gunpoint by traffickers on Sept. 19, is a severe setback to the government's attempt to reach peace with Colombia's powerful cocaine cartels.

Montoya's brother German was one of the most powerful officials in the former government of President Virgilio Barco and is now ambassador in Canada.

The drug lords last week threatened to resume a war on the government and ordered the execution of two hostages in retaliation for a series of police raids. They withdrew the threat Wednesday after a new peace offer from the government, but said they had already ordered Montoya's execution and it could be too late to save her.

The body of an elderly woman, with five bullet wounds, was found in Bogota a week ago, police said. Coroners and police could not identify her and she was buried in a common grave with five unidentified men, local radio said.

The body was identified as

Montoya only after a doctor recognised her picture on television and authorities ordered her body exhumed, the radio said.

German Montoya, secretary-general of the president's office until Barco left office last August, was at the centre of a previous kidnapping crisis in January 1990 when traffickers kidnapped his son.

The traffickers alleged the government promised negotiations in exchange for his son's release but then went back on the promise. Barco's government denied the allegation.

Montoya is the second hostage of the traffickers killed in a week. Journalist and ex-president's daughter Diana Turbay was shot dead last Friday when police raided a farm near Medellin. The police and drug lords each accused the other of killing her.

In a separate development, former Colombian guerrillas in a symbolic gesture of reconciliation Thursday returned Latin American independence hero Simon Bolivar's sword to the museum they stole it from 17 years ago.

Antonio Navarro, leader of the former rebel group M-19, handed the silver ceremonial sword to a group of children in a ceremony at the Bolivar Museum as President Cesar Gaviria and other officials watched.

The sword was then returned to its showcase in the white-walled museum in a building where Bolivar once lived.

Bolivar led Colombia's fight for independence from Spain and that of other South American countries seeking freedom from their colonial masters in the early 19th century.

Council of Europe gives special status to Romania

STRASBOURG (Agencies) — Romania was granted special guest status in the Council of Europe Friday despite doubts about its progress towards democracy.

A Council spokesman said its political bureau took the decision following a visit to Strasbourg this week by Prime Minister Petre Roman.

Special guest status, seen as a first step towards full membership of the 24-nation Strasbourg-based organisation, can be withdrawn.

The Council of Europe, the most broadly-based democratic institution on the continent, has promoted Western democratic values since it was formed in 1949.

All other East and Central European countries apart from Albania have a special guest status or full membership. Romania's admission followed publication of a report by the Romanian parliament into riots in Bucharest last June, when coalminers violently suppressed anti-government protests at the request of President Ion Iliescu.

"The situation in Romania leaves much to be desired both as regards progress towards democracy and treatment of minorities but it would be illogical to continue to refuse to give Bucharest special guest status when countries such as Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union already have it," a Council official said.

Czechoslovakia's application

for full membership of the Council was approved unanimously Wednesday. It will join Hungary as the second Warsaw Pact country with full membership.

Meanwhile, Bulgarian President Jelin Jelez said Thursday his country has fully embraced democracy and asked that it be admitted to Europe's leading human rights organisation.

Speaking to the Council of Europe's legislative body, Jelez said Bulgaria is "firmly resolved to be a full member of all European institutions and undertakes to shoulder its part of the responsibilities."

Bulgaria formally applied last week for full membership in the 24-nation Council, the oldest organisation seeking cooperation in Europe.

Jelez made the request public with a plea that the world recognise the political and economic reforms the country has made since the hardline Communist regime was ousted early last year.

"In a single year, the picture of Bulgaria has changed substantially," he told the Council's 183-member assembly.

He added, however, that Bulgaria's reforms are threatened by an economic crisis aggravated by the Gulf war. Support for the trade embargo against Iraq has cost Bulgaria \$1.4 billion, he said.

Council officials said the body would probably wait until another round of free elections take place in Bulgaria before acting on its application.

Retiring Runcie makes plea for truth

LONDON (AP) — Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie, retiring after an 11-year-primacy, has said his "constant concern" remains securing the release of envoy Terry Waite, who disappeared in Lebanon.

Waite helped free three U.S. and seven British captives in the middle East before he vanished in Beirut on Jan. 20, 1987, during his fifth mission on behalf of the primacy.

"The story of his (Waite's) remarkable ministry in the early days remains to be fully told but his return to us has been my constant concern and will remain so," Runcie said.

He spoke at Church House near Westminster Abbey in his last public address before retiring at midnight as spiritual head of the Church of England and leader of the world's 70 million Anglicans.

The liberal-minded archbishop made no direct reference to his clashes with political leaders in a decade that coincided with Margaret Thatcher's three terms as prime minister.

Of his hopes for the future of the church, Runcie said: "I hope it will be an age when we will tend again to the quality of the proclamation of the Gospel, not just in preaching or updating the way in which we communicate but thinking more seriously about what we have to communicate."

But Runcie, whose defence of tolerance and outspokenness for the underprivileged often drew fire from Thatcher supporters, said he regretted the emergence of party strife in the policy-making synod of the church.

"The synod sometimes failed in not recognising the complexity of the world around it," the archbishop told his crowded audience. He urged them: "Think more clearly and feel passionately."

"There will never be uniformity. Conflict is inevitable but truth must always be paramount, although it is sometimes difficult to recognise what is true," he said.

Pyongyang: War games threaten inter-Korean talks

PYONGYANG (R) — North Korea said Friday current U.S.-South Korean military manoeuvres could jeopardise a high-level inter-Korean meeting later this month.

"We consider the exercise to be creating an artificial obstacle to the North-South talks," Foreign Minister Kim Yong Nam told visiting Japanese reporters.

"Accordingly we are obliged to cope prudently with the inter-Korean talks. We are now giving serious thought (to the question)."

The annual Team Spirit joint exercise is just starting in South Korea, where the United States maintains some 40,000 troops.

Pyongyang has fiercely attacked the decision to go ahead with team spirit at a time when prime minister-level dialogue has begun between the two Koreas for the first time since the peninsula was split after World War II.

The two premiers have met three times since September, without concrete results so far but with the goal of reducing tensions on the peninsula and moving

U.S. puts diplomats in Baltics; encourages independence votes

MOSCOW (AP) — The United States has stationed diplomats in the Baltic republics and U.S. officials are encouraging separatists there to hold popular votes on their independence declarations, Baltic officials have said.

Estonia's parliament decided Thursday to hold a referendum on March 3, two weeks before the date set by Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev for a nationwide vote. Lithuania has scheduled a vote for Feb. 9, and Latvia is expected to consider one soon.

U.S. pressure for a peaceful resolution of the Baltic crisis increased after Soviet troops killed 13 unarmed civilians in an attack on the Lithuanian television station on Jan. 13, American and Baltic officials say.

Since then, with the additional deaths of five Latvians and one Lithuanian in Soviet attacks, the United States has kept two diplomats in each of the three republics to "act as a check on Soviet behaviour," a U.S. official said. Expelling them would signal a renewed crackdown, he said.

The U.S. government has never recognised the forced annexation of the Baltic republics during World War II — they had been independent between the two world wars — and had barred its diplomats from meeting with officials of the previous Communist regimes there.

U.S. Ambassador Jack Matlock and U.S. congressmen have been discussing proposals for a referendum with Estonian leaders, said Endel Lippmaa, the republic's minister for negotiating independence from the Soviet Union.

"They stressed that such a re-

ferendum is necessary for international relations," Lippmaa said.

For nearly a year, separatist Baltic leaders have balked at Gorbachev's demands for referendum on secession. They said resounding victories by pro-independence candidates in free parliamentary elections last spring were sufficient. They also had feared that ethnic Russians, particularly in Latvia and Estonia, could vote to reject secession.

But "the past two weeks decreased the chance of retaining these republics within the Soviet Union," the Soviet News Agency (TASS) said in a commentary Thursday.

"Changes in favour of compromises indicate that the Baltic governments have greater confidence in public support after the tragic events in Vilnius and Riga," TASS said.

The U.S. ambassador declined to say whether he has been recommending a referendum. But one American official said, "we think it would be a good idea to show the depth of support in the countries."

"Gorbachev does not understand how many Russians (living in the Baltic republics) support independence," said one U.S. official, speaking on condition he not be further identified.

Juozas Tumelis, chairman of the pro-independence Lithuanian group Sajudis, predicted victory by 9-to-1 margin. "We want to clearly show Gorbachev the referendum results," he said. "This also is our defence before the West."

Gorbachev is hostile to a Lithuanian plan for a poll that

includes only five-year residents, officials in Vilnius say.

A Kremlin official explained that Gorbachev wants referendums on remaining in the union held in all 15 republics on March 17, under a Soviet law that allows soldiers to vote where they are stationed. There are more than 300,000 Soviet soldiers stationed in the Baltics, U.S. officials estimate, and the Kremlin could tip the balance by sending in more troops.

Officials in all three Baltic republics report signs that Moscow may be ready to talk. TASS said Thursday that a Gorbachev envoy told Latvians he will negotiate with them "on the basis of the Soviet constitution and taking into account their parliamentary acts of independence."

Separatists in the Baltics have criticised U.S. officials for nearly a year for not giving stronger support to their independence movement.

Baltic officials said that the decision to postpone the planned U.S.-Soviet summit in February, although not attributed to the Soviet crackdown, was related to American complaints about bloodshed in the Baltics.

"American dissatisfaction was quite clearly expressed," Valdis Berzins, Latvian Foreign Ministry spokesman and foreign editor of the Popular Front newspaper, Atmoda.

U.S. President George Bush said in his State of the Union address that he had received Soviet assurances that the level of violence in the Baltics would fall.

Several hundred soldiers were seen leaving the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius that day.

Troops start patrolling in Moscow

MOSCOW (AP) — A small contingent of Soviet soldiers began patrolling Moscow Friday despite charges by the Russian legislature that the patrols are unconstitutional.

In the Kremlin, President Mikhail Gorbachev faced off Friday with republic leaders who are angry over the deployment of Soviet troops on their streets, as well as military attacks on civilians in the Baltics that have killed 20 people.

Six of the 15 republics have denounced the patrols, which Soviet security officials say are needed to fight rising crime. Some reformers say the patrols are the first step toward a state of emergency.

The deployment began quietly

in Moscow early Friday, starting with just 36 soldiers on duty in the city's nine railroad stations, said Gen. Nikolai Mirnikov of the Moscow branch of the Interior Ministry. The troops are to operate in patrols of four, which include a policeman and an army officer armed with pistols, and two ordinary soldiers armed with bayonet knives, Mirnikov said.

The Moscow patrols will be extended after dark, to include 300-540 soldiers, according to figures given by Mirnikov. Five or six teams will be assigned to each of the city's 30 districts, patrolling about 100 distinct routes, Mirnikov said.

"There will not be one tank, not one armored personnel carrier," Mirnikov said. He promised

that no soldiers would be deployed during demonstrations, as democratic activists have feared.

National Interior Ministry officials refused to say whether the soldiers had begun patrols elsewhere in the country. The patrols were authorised in a decree signed secretly on Dec. 29.

Officials in the republics of Georgia and Lithuania, which demanded the patrol order be rescinded, said they had no immediate reports of soldiers on duty on their streets.

Friday's Federation Council meeting was to be the first time Gorbachev faced the presidents of the republics since 13 civilians and a soldier were killed in a military attack on the television station in Lithuania on Jan. 13.

Gorbachev threatens to sue Russian millionaire over islands charges

MOSCOW (R) — President Mikhail Gorbachev has threatened to sue a Soviet millionaire over his allegations that the Kremlin leader had reached a secret deal with Japan to sell back islands seized 45 years ago for \$200 billion.

A statement issued by Gorbachev's press service said the charges by Artiom Tarasov, a Russian parliament deputy and millionaire entrepreneur, were "a glaring act of political provocation."

"Mikhail Gorbachev intends to sue Tarasov for slanderous allegations directed against him unless Tarasov makes public apologies for spreading them," said the statement, carried by the Soviet News Agency (TASS).

Gorbachev, who is also Communist Party chief, was quizzed over the report when he

attended a meeting of the party leadership Thursday, TASS said.

The Soviet Union seized the four southernmost islands in the Kurile chain — known in Japan as the Northern Territories — in the closing weeks of World War II. Tokyo has refused to sign a peace treaty with Moscow until are handed back.

The issue is certain to loom large in an official visit to Tokyo by Gorbachev scheduled for mid-April. But a Japanese delegation that visited Moscow in January saw no softening in the Soviet position.

Tarasov, who benefited from Gorbachev's perestroika (restructuring) reforms to build up a fortune out of cooperative ventures and is now a member of the Russian parliament's Democratic Movement, made his allega-

tions at a news conference last Monday.

He said Gorbachev had reached a secret agreement with Japan to return the islands in exchange for Tokyo investing \$200 billion in the Soviet economy.

Tarasov said this would be used to give a quick boost to living standards, winning Gorbachev popular support, while at the same time allowing him to maintain "dictatorial power" and to liquidate the democratic opposition.

Tarasov said later he did not feel there were any grounds for legal action by Gorbachev against him, but he added he was ready to apologise if necessary.

"If the president thinks it suits him somehow, I'm ready to apologise," he told Reuters.

COLUMN

U.S. officer's stolen documents found

ATHENS (R) — Documents, including a passport and some pass stolen from a British navy officer in Athens, have been found, the British embassy said Thursday. Thieves broke into the car of Commander Christopher Morgan Wednesday and stole a briefcase. Morgan is a British representative of NATO at the Greek Ministry of Defence, was the second embarrassment of defence-related documents involving the British navy in two months. The theft took place in the midst of a bomb and rocket campaign in Athens by urban guerrilla group. A British embassy spokesman said a thief stole Morgan's briefcase from his parked car but added that both the briefcase and all documents inside, including security pass to the Greek Defence Ministry, were found short time later. "It was a simple case of petty theft," the spokesman said, adding he did not know whether anyone had been arrested in the case.

Heroin smuggled in drug-saturated clothes

NEW YORK (AP) — In a new wrinkle in the illegal drug trade, a gang smuggled heroin out of the Middle East in clothing saturated with the drug, investigators said. A 14-month investigation led to the arrests Wednesday of more than 25 members of the ring, which operated a \$25-million-a-year heroin trade in and around a park named in honour of a slain anti-drug crusader, police commissioner Lee Brown said. The charges ranged from criminal possession to conspiracy to sell heroin. The gang employed common smuggling techniques such as swallowing heroin packed in condoms and inserting packages of the drug into various body cavities, said chief Anthony M. Volker, of the department's Organized Crime Control Bureau. But in addition, "they used clothing that was saturated in heroin that had been diluted in water," Volker said. The smugglers would then dry the garments and pack them into suitcases, which were carried through customs. "When the garments reached here, they would be processed and 70 per cent of the heroin was recovered from the garments," Volker said. To process the garments, the smugglers "used a small washing machine, then they would take the discharge water and evaporate the water," leaving the heroin, the chief said.

Journal of medicine names new editor

WALTHAM, Massachusetts (R) — A specialist in internal medicine and professor at Tufts University Medical School in Boston was named editor of the New England Journal of Medicine. Effective July 1, Dr. Jerome P. Kassirer, 58, will succeed journal editor Dr. Arnold Reiman, who announced his retirement last July. Reiman, editor since 1977, has built the prestigious journal's worldwide circulation to 225,000, including some 100 general media outlets which give its weekly reports on medical issues and scientific advances wide public exposure.

Manager fined for trying to bite umpire

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — The Venezuelan Professional Baseball Association has fined baseball manager Domingo Carrasquel \$1,000 for grabbing and attempting to bite in the neck umpire Emilio Velazquez. The incident occurred during a playoff game in Caracas between the Cardenales de Lara (Lara Cardinals) and Leones Del Caracas (Caracas Lions). Cardenales manager Carrasquel protested a decision by umpire Velazquez which left Leones player Jesus Alfaro safe on first base during the eighth inning. Cardenales needed to win to become champion and represent Venezuela at the Caribbean series in Miami, Florida. Carrasquel left the dugout insulting the umpire. He then jumped furiously on him, grabbed Velazquez's neck and tried to bite him in best vampire style. Terrified Velazquez got help from players and was at least spared from the bite. Leones went on to win the game 4-3. "We fined Carrasquel so that baseball rules and good sporting behaviour in Venezuela be maintained," Rafael Marcial Garmendia, local baseball league president, told reporters.

guy took the initiative in calling for talks, but set a high price — Japanese reparations not just for 1910-45 but also for the half century since then during which Pyongyang feels it has been victimised by Tokyo.

Japan was responsible to some degree for the 1945 U.S.-Soviet division of the peninsula, "the root of the Korean people's unhappiness and misfortune," chief North Korean delegate Chon In-Chol told reporters this week.

Tokyo entered the normalisation talks insisting Pyongyang accept international inspection of its nuclear facilities to show the world it is not developing nuclear weapons.

Officials in North Korea, which has subscribed to the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty, deny steps toward producing nuclear arms.

It has, however, so far refused to sign a follow-up accord on inspection, saying Washington must first agree to similar access to U.S. military facilities in South Korea.

views were apart to some extent. "If we conduct consultations sincerely, I think we could narrow the differences ... and reach agreement," he said.

It was not clear what a break in the fragile inter-Korean dialogue would have on the North's negotiations with Japan.

Seoul has urged Tokyo to limit progress in its contacts with Pyongyang to the pace of improvement in North-South ties.

In Pyongyang Thursday, negotiators told reporters the first round of Japan-North Korean discussions had taken place in a polite, friendly manner. Though they made no concrete progress on resolving problems, the two sides did agree to convene again in March in Tokyo.

Japan's 1910-1945 colonial rule of Korea left an enduringly bitter legacy in both halves of the peninsula. Tokyo's relations with the South were normalised in 1965. Until last year it had made no progress in sinking differences with North Korea.

Then the cash-strapped Pyon-